No. 4 Vol. 32

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The Popular Magazine

FIRST JUNE NUMBER OUT-MAY 7, 1914

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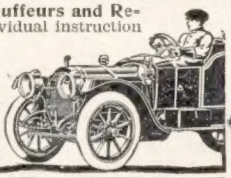

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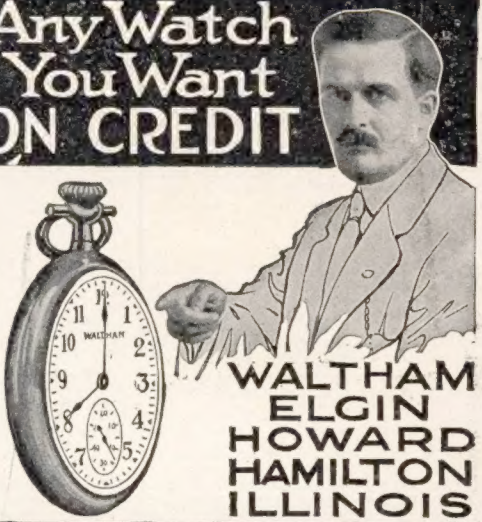

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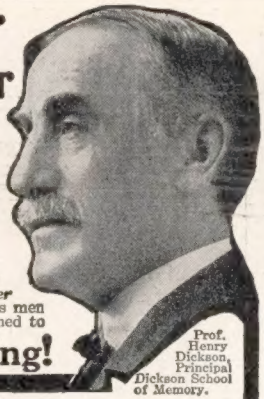

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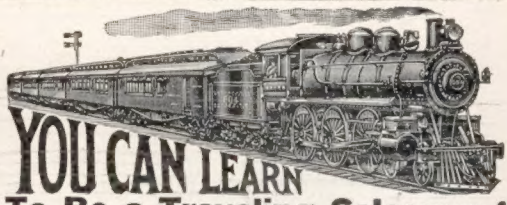

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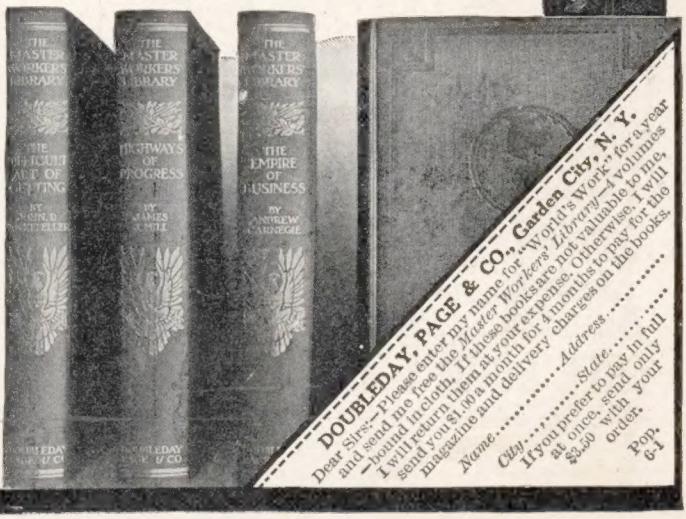

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VOLUME XXXII NUMBER 4

TWICE-A-MONTH

The Popular Magazine

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THE POPULAR MAGAZINE

VOL. XXXII. JUNE 1, 1914. No. 4.

A Ton of Gold

By Bertrand W. Sinclair

Author of "North of Fifty-Three," "The Laying of the Ghost," Etc.

For men—and for women who like a man's man—this latest novel of Sinclair's is sure of an enthusiastic welcome. Again the author has chosen his familiar and beloved field of the great magnetic Northwest, and has set his hero, Spike Clancy, a task that would baffle any man with a heart less lionlike than his. With all aboard dead drunk—captain, crew, and passengers—Clancy takes the helm, guides the *Bubble and Squeak* through snarling waters and makes port in safety; but in that memorable passage a ton of gold disappears, leaving lead in its place. What became of it? In his mystery Sinclair holds you unmeshed—a prisoner, but a delighted one.

(*A Complete Novel*)

CHAPTER I.

ABOARD THE "BUBBLE."

CLANCY came hurrying aft to see about casting off the stern line. In a long, open cargo space back of the engine-room bulkhead, he stubbed his toe on a small, square box, and almost fell headlong. A man standing in the doorway, looking up at the slip, with a short-barreled shotgun in the crook of his arm, turned to observe Clancy's mishap, and grinned widely. Whereupon the Irish in Clancy—which was ten-tenths—rose impromptu. He kicked the offending object, with intent to send it tumbling overside through the open cargo door. It was a small box, not over sixteen inches square, and a foot deep. But it did not budge, and Clancy's toe suffered from the impact.

The fellow with the shotgun roared.

"What's eatin' on *you?*" Clancy belligerently demanded.

"Nawthin'—nawthin' *a*-tall," the other replied. "Only it's kinda funny to see you tryin' to kick sixty thousand dollars' worth of gold into the river. Darned if it ain't."

"That's a fine way to stow gold dust," Clancy growled, and passed on.

Any old thing went on the Skeena those days. But even at that, Clancy was a mite surprised at such careless stowing of precious freight. Particularly as the box, he perceived, was only one of seven or eight having a similar capacity and supposed value. The skipper had mentioned that consignment

from the Skookumchuck gold fields. It was rather a notable shipment, even in that period of surprising things.

A ton of gold! It titillated the imagination. Clancy, striding aft to his work, said to himself that a double handful or so out of one box would do *him*. And he reflected, too, that if he were the consignor he would have it in a more inaccessible place than the middle of the cargo deck—even if four men with businesslike weapons did mount guard. It was a perfunctory guardianship, from what he had seen. That, however, was the shipper's funeral, or the steamship company's, he did not know which—nor care. The ton of gold was, in its essentially practical aspect, simply so much freight to Clancy, whose stipend was seventy a month and his grub.

The whistle lifted its strident voice in a warning blast when Clancy skipped up the aft companionway to where he could overlook the deck hand who stood by to haul in the stern line. Uncle Bill Rose bellowed inarticulately from the pilot-house window, and Clancy gave the wharfinger the high sign to cast loose. The engine began to throb, and as the thrust of the paddles eased her up on her moorings, the lines came free. Then she swung away from the bank, and, as the current caught her, the bell clanged for full speed ahead. Sternward, the broad-bladed wheel lashed the river surface foamy white as the *Bubble and Squeak* gained way.

Clancy stood by his post a minute watching the banks slide by. There was a tremendous vibration throughout the ancient hull, a steady tr-*umph*, tr-*umph*. Clancy's ear, attuned to the smooth power plants of better craft, detected many a discordant note.

"*Bubble and Squeak*," he grunted. "She's well named."

And she was that. You will not find her listed as such on the register of Pacific coast shipping, but every riverman between Kispiox Cañon and Port Essington—yes, from the Tsimpsean Peninsula to Elliot Bay—knew the old bucket by that name. When she was pushed, and no boat ever bucked the fierce currents of the Skeena River without being of necessity pushed to her limit at times, squeaks of protest arose from her shaken frame, and in divers places the planking seams opened up to let the waters of the river bubble through. The bilge pumps were the most important part of her equipment, and they saw constant service.

She was overengined for her construction, that was all. And when the vibration and pounding was discounted, it was not so bad a fault. She could bore up Kitselas Cañon under her own power when some of the other river craft had to line through. The Skeena is strewn with the bones of stern-wheelers that came to grief because they lacked power to give them steerageway in those ferocious currents, but the *Bubble* made her trips unscathed—though there were plenty of narrow shaves, and it was always an even bet that each trip would be her last. Some day Uncle Bill Rose would shake the whole bottom out of her, the wise ones prophesied. Her timbers were too old and rotten to stand the gaff. It was reported that Waldron, her engineer, had a habit of hooking a twenty-four-inch Stilson over his safety valve and forgetting all about it when they hit the Kitselas and Uncle Bill bawled down the speaking tube for more steam.

Clancy had run as mate on the *Bubble* all that season—an exceptional record. Uncle Bill Rose was a hard old nut to get along with. But he had taken a real liking to Clancy, probably because Clancy was typical of himself, outspoken, independent, perfectly willing to take a chance, and asking odds of no man. The old chap had whispered to Clancy, sub rosa, that if he stayed out the season he would have a hundred-

dollar job dropped in his lap in the spring. The company was building a new craft to replace the *Bubble;* an up-to-the-minute boat good for twenty-two knots. She would be a credit to the company, and to the men who manned her. So Clancy was holding down the job, having, like other young men of his stripe, a certain amount of ambition for better things.

But strictly between Clancy and the gatepost, he doubted if Uncle Bill Rose would hold down a berth on the river another season. Everybody on the Skeena drank more or less—generally more. It was a perfectly natural reaction. But they did their drinking ashore, where it was supposed to be done. Lately Uncle Bill had been keeping a few shots in his locker—secretly, as he supposed—and firing them oftener than he should. Drunk or sober, he was the best pilot on the river. Still, Clancy knew that when a man dilutes his mentality with alcohol there is bound to come a time when his brain doesn't work swiftly enough in the pinch.

Clancy went down on the cargo deck and made his way forward. The boxes of gold were piled now, and the shotgun quartet disposed at its ease in the vicinity. A queer place to stow it, Clancy thought again. On their last up-river trip they had knocked out two bulkheads to accommodate a consignment of live stock. That left a big open space the full width of the *Bubble* and at least fifty feet long. The bullion boxes and the guard had this space all to themselves. So far as freight was concerned, they always ran down light. And this time they were light on passengers also. Everybody was going in instead of out. There had been another big gold strike in the hinterlands back of Hazelton, where this treasure shipment had originated, and the lure of the stuff in those heavy boxes was drawing all men the other way.

He nodded to the gold guards, and passed on. A man leaning over the rail around the boiler pit looked up and greeted him:

"Hello, Spike!"

Him Clancy passed with a frown. He had clashed with that worthy once upon a time. Smily Brooks was on Clancy's black list. He had a licking due him. But Smily was a passenger and he a ship's officer, so the best he could do was to ignore him. But he wondered if Smily had his usual crooked crowd for company, and if so, why they were going out when the picking should be good in the interior at that season. He dismissed Smily Brooks from his mind, however, as he ascended to the pilot house.

"Everythin' shipshape, Clancy?" Uncle Bill inquired.

"Yes, sir."

"Take the wheel, then, for a bit. I'll relieve you in half an hour."

This was a trifle unusual, for even on a river boat there are regular watches, and Clancy was supposed to be off as soon as they cleared Hazelton. But he took the wheel without comment.

The thirty minutes lengthened to an hour. Then Uncle Bill returned, with a betraying smell about him, and an accentuated gleam in his hard, old eyes.

"Light on cargo live an' dead this time," he chirped. "We'll whoop it up when we're through the cañon. But we got treasure aboard, Clancy," he dug his mate facetiously in the ribs. "A ton uh gold, Clancy. What yuh think uh that?"

Clancy went below. He observed, from a circumspect distance, that a bottle circulated among the guards. He lifted his shoulders at that, and, moving forward under the lee of the wheelhouse, disposed himself comfortably on a roll of canvas.

The shore streamed past. Below, the shotgun men were hitting the bottle.

Up in the wheelhouse, he made no doubt, Uncle Bill was likewise fortifying himself with an occasional portion of rye. A fine and dandy company to be in charge of half a million in yellow metal, Clancy reflected. And, if Smily Brooks was accompanied by his usual familiars, by the time they hit Kitselas Cañon, he, Spike Clancy, would be about the only sober man outside of the engine room.

"Oh, well, what's the odds?" said Clancy. "Let her rip."

And she *was* ripping, splitting the Skeena wide open at seventeen knots, superimposed on an eight-knot current. Clancy lay back on his roll of canvas, watching through half-closed eyes the swift-changing panorama of wooded banks, and for the life of him he could not get his mind off that consignment of gold from Skookumchuck.

A ton of gold! A ton of gold! A ton of gold!

That was the refrain droning monotonously in the *Bubble's* exhaust. It was repeated over and over in the chunk-a-chunk of her machinery.

"Sixteen men on a dead man's chest!
Yo-ho-ho—and a bottle of rum!"

Clancy had read Stevenson. Likewise he had once heard a famous baritone sing the "Pirate Song." And he had the vivid imagination of the true Celt.

Well, the bottle of rum was there, all right. But there were no pirates on the Skeena River, so far as Clancy knew.

CHAPTER II.

LIQUID CARGO.

By the time the *Bubble* stuck her nose into the gaping mouth of Kitselas Cañon, Uncle Bill Rose was nearer drunk than Clancy had ever seen him while on watch. It worried Clancy. To be sure, he knew that Uncle Bill was solid on his pins, and apparently far from the danger line of intoxication. Nevertheless, they were about to negotiate a passage wherein the tiniest miscalculation meant the *Bubble's* finish—and in all probability the watery extinguishment of all on board.

The Skeena pours through the narrow length of Kitselas Cañon with torrential fury. It is full of rips and giddy whirlpools, and grim rock walls present a merciless face to any craft unfortunate enough to be dashed against them. And here was Uncle Bill in a sportive mood, an alcoholic exhilaration, cocking a glazed blue eye on the surging river; holding that ticklish reach far too lightly, in Clancy's estimation. And Clancy was not subject to nervous spasms, not by any means.

It was the custom for both of them to stand by in the pilot house during the cañon passage, one at the wheel, the other by the tube that led to the engineer, in addition to the signal-bell rope. Clancy had seen Uncle Bill compelled to climb the spokes of the wheel like a squirrel to bring her over fast enough at some dangerous point. It was a man's job to steer any kind of boat through Kitselas, and no mistake. And it was well for the *Bubble* and the baker's dozen of souls upon her that Clancy was there that gray October afternoon.

The *Bubble* shot around a jutting point—and yawed suddenly, with an unaccountable lurch. Clancy took his gaze off the stream ahead, and jumped for the wheel, with his hair beginning to rise. Uncle Bill Rose had slipped limply to the floor and taken the wheel over a full half turn as he slipped down.

Clancy had no time to bestow on him. He jammed the wheel port, bracing himself involuntarily for the inevitable. No use to ring the bell for reverse—the current would take her hell-bent to destruction before she lost half the way that was on her. So Clancy bore hard

over on the wheel, praying the gear would stand the strain, and hung breathless for a crucial ten seconds.

Then he straightened her out for a mile shoot of smooth, swift water, and wiped his damp forehead. That was as close a shave as Clancy wanted. By a matter of forty feet or so the *Bubble* had escaped ramming her bow fair over a ragged ledge that would have ripped the bottom out of her clear back to the engines.

With that danger astern, Clancy looked anxiously down at Uncle Bill, who was sprawled on his back, the short gray beard of him tilted at a rakish angle toward the pilot-house roof. He was semiconscious. A dull gleam of comprehension flickered in the eye that gradually rolled around to meet Clancy's. But he was in a bad way, from some cause. His face was the color of a brick, and he made feeble, ineffectual efforts to raise himself. Clancy extended a helping hand. Uncle Bill sat up on his aged haunches, and nursed his face in his shaking hands.

"What's the matter?" Clancy inquired.

"Gal-dinged if *I* know!" Uncle Bill murmured. "I'm feelin' fine and dandy, and then all to once everythin' goes black before m' eyes. Did we hit somethin'?"

"Darned close to it!" Clancy replied, with considerable tartness in his tone. "Missed Sawtooth by a hair."

"I'm sick, gal-ding it!" Uncle Bill complained. "I dunno what's the matter with me. Never felt like this in m' life. Feel weak as a rabbit. Wow!"

Certainly he exhibited every symptom of distress. His brow was shiny with sweat, and the torrid hue of his face presently gave way to an uncommon degree of pallor. His hands shook as if he had a chill.

"I guess it's up to you to hold her to it, Clancy," he mumbled, after a little. "I'm about all in. I couldn't stand up to the wheel if I tried. I'll lie down for a while."

"All right," Clancy replied.

Uncle Bill rose, tottered unsteadily out to his cabin just aft of the pilot house, and Clancy stood alone at the wheel, director of the *Bubble's* destiny through the remaining dangers of Kitselas Cañon.

He was unequivocally thankful, not to say highly relieved, when the *Bubble* finally slid out into the less turgid and wider reaches of the Skeena. True, the entire responsibility was not altogether to his liking, even there. It was a thankless task, at best. But so long as the master of the ship was on the shelf, it was up to him to make the best of the burden. So he held his course in the channel patiently, until such time as Uncle Bill should recover from his vertigo, and relieve him.

But that seemed to be a matter of extreme indefiniteness. For three hours after debouching from Kitselas he stood to his post, getting very leg weary, and chafing at the long watch. His eyes ached from the strain of looking ahead. It was nearing dusk. He was thankful that there were no stops. Earlier in the season it would have been awkward. As it was, the *Bubble* had a clear run to Port Essington, to make connections with the steamship *Admiral*.

"Hang it!" Clancy said to himself, with the approach of sundown; "if Uncle Bill's goin' to be off the job altogether, I got to get something to eat. That's a cinch!"

He yelled down the speaking tube, when he had summoned attention through the buzzer.

"Say, Waldron," when he got the engineer, "find Stearns and send him up here, will you?"

In five minutes or so, Waldron conveyed a disturbing message.

"Stearns is drunk, spifflicated, para-

lyzed," said he. "Fact is, 'most everybody below seems to be jagged."

"Blazes!" Clancy yelled back. "Can you come up here for a few minutes?"

"Well, I got some tinkerin' to do on this dynamo. We got to have lights pretty soon," the engineer grunted.

"By Jiminy! somebody's got to come up here for a little while," Clancy declared. "If you're not too drunk, you better come yourself."

He could hear Waldron chuckle.

"All right, all right!" that gentleman replied. "Hold the fort."

He poked his grimy face in the wheelhouse door a minute later.

"What's the trouble?" he inquired mildly.

"Nothin' much. I want you to take the wheel for a bit," said Clancy. "Keep her straight on that point."

"Aw, get out! I know this channel as well as any pilot that ever run the Skeena," Waldron retorted good-naturedly. "But you want to transact your business with some speed."

Clancy stepped into the captain's cabin. Uncle Bill sprawled ungracefully on his berth, snoring vigorously. Clancy's lip curled at sight of a bottle and glass on a convenient locker. He bent over the old man. The fumes of whisky uprose in a nauseating reek. He shook him anything but gently, eliciting the barest grunt in response. Clancy shrugged his shoulders. Uncle Bill was certainly dead to the world, and even if he were aroused he was in no condition to take the wheel. Even more imperatively than ever it was up to him, Clancy. He closed the cabin door softly.

"I got to run below," he said to Waldron. "I won't be long"

"Better not," the engineer warned, "if you want juice for that searchlight when you need it."

Clancy leaped down the companionway, headed for the galley. The *Bubble's* crew included a cook, one combination steward, cabin boy, and waiter, and four deck hands. The whole kettle of fish were stewed in whisky, Clancy speedily discovered. Fortunately, while the cook had progressed to the stage of wailing mournful ballads, he was a good-natured individual, and not yet too drunk to know his business. Him, Clancy instructed to prepare some food and bring it on a tray to the pilot house.

Then he took a look aft, bestowing, as he went, a well-deserved kick on the recumbent form of Stearns, who ranked as bos'n, a somewhat anomalous position on a river boat, and who was ingloriously laid out on the deck. Farther along, Clancy took a squint at the treasure and its shotgun brigade. Here, too, John Barleycorn had asserted his mastery. In the half light 'tween decks he made out three forms prone beside their weapons, and one perched on the array of small square boxes, his shotgun across his knees, warbling hoarsely:

"'Way down yander in de cawnfield."

"Fine bunch all round, by Jiminy!" Clancy muttered in disgust. "Fine bunch, yes."

He went swiftly down the side and peeped in what passed for a saloon as he passed. One or two strangers, he saw, and Smily Brooks curled in a decrepit chair, his chin sunk on his breast. Then Clancy went back to his post.

"Your firemen on the job?" he asked.

"You bet your sweet life they are!" Waldron grunted. "The guy that comes on watch drunk gets sobered with a spanner—an' he knows it."

"You give me steam and I'll take her through," Clancy observed. "The old man's down and out—sick."

"Yeah, I know what he's sick with!" the engineer growled. "It seems to be catchin'. I ain't rappin' Uncle Bill, y' understand. I wouldn't say it to anybody but you, Clancy. But if he don't

take a tumble to himself there'll be another Skeena disaster one uh these days. I don't like it. I'm kinda glad it's the tail end of the season, the way he's hittin' the bottle."

"Where in blazes did all the whisky come from?" Clancy said irritably. "I've seen jags aboard before—but, darn it, everybody's drunk this trip; crew and all."

"Aw, I suppose everybody brought his grip full at Hazelton, and passed it around good and free," Waldron replied. "Treasure aboard, too, I hear?"

"A ton of gold dust from the Skookumchuck mines!" Clancy muttered. "And the men that are supposed to stand with their eagle eye on it layin' around paralyzed! Fine business!"

"A ton of gold? Gee whiz!" said the engineer. "We'll get it in the neck if anything happens to that."

"Aw, nothin's goin' to happen," Clancy declared.

"Well, me for the dynamo job," Waldron remarked. "There's two of us strictly sober, anyway. I guess we'll manage."

He disappeared, and Clancy bent his gaze on the river. The twilight deepened. Clancy was about to call the engine room, when the running lights twinkled forth. He switched on the twelve-inch searchlight. The arc laid a dazzling ray on the river surface three thousand feet ahead. With that to pick his course down the channel and show whatever driftwood or other floating obstruction might lie in his path, Clancy breathed easier. The worst of the Skeena lay astern. The throb of the engines beat out with reassuring regularity.

His vigil was presently broken by the cook, bearing, uncertainly, his supper on a tray. Clancy ate. Then he drew a stool up to the wheel and settled himself for the long watch.

Wide-eyed, alert, Clancy was abnormally sensitive to sounds that night. The reverse of phlegmatic by temperament, the mere fact that the safety of the *Bubble* and her cargo, animate and inanimate, lay solely upon himself and his single-handed vigilance, kept him on his mettle. Hands resting on the polished spokes, eyes steadfast on the uttermost range of his searchlight, a multitude of sounds impinged upon his consciousness, each conveying to his quickened brain a message; the sibilant swish of water under the *Bubble's* forefoot, the vibrant thump of the engines, the muffled clank, clank of an ancient bilge pump; and back at the stern the ponderous thrashing of the paddle blades, beating out a foamy wake. All these sounds were magnified in the silent, windless night. Even the occasional sputter of the carbons in his searchlight seemed intensified, and likewise the groaning noise of the tiller gear as he shifted the wheel from time to time.

And just as the *Bubble* rounded Wolf Point and drew inshore for the run along Sand-fly Bottoms, Clancy started on his stool.

He thought—indeed, he was sure—he heard a splash.

CHAPTER III.

BASER METAL.

Clancy was quite positive of that splash—a sound altogether distinct from any disturbance caused by the *Bubble*. His first thought was that some one had fallen overside, and instantly he swung the searchlight on the streaming wake. But its piercing glare revealed no bobbing head, no object of any sort whatever afloat on the water. And, after letting his ray sweep the surface sufficiently to disclose any possible swimmer, Clancy came to the conclusion that his ears had played him a trick—or that whatever had gone overboard went straight to the bottom. Nevertheless, he called the engineer, and had

him look about to see if all was right below. Waldron shortly reported that John Barleycorn had everybody down and out, and that all was well.

So Clancy dismissed the matter from his mind.

For a fifteen-mile stretch along Sand-fly Bottoms, the *Bubble's* customary course lay close in along shore, over a gravelly bottom, where the current flowed easily, with a uniform depth of eight feet. This was ample for her, as she drew only thirty inches. He could run wide open, with assured absence of snags, bars, or ledges. And Clancy kept her full speed. He was tired, wishful for the lights of Port Essington, so that he could tie up and turn in. Sand-fly Bottoms soon fell behind. The farther the *Bubble* plowed downstream the less dangerous was her passage, and the more Waldron and Clancy crowded her.

So that in the fullness of time they opened out the few pin points of yellow against a background of ebony, which betokened their landing, and some time in the little hours sidled alongside and made fast to the wharf, the *Bubble's* snub nose close under the high stern of the *Admiral,* a coastwise steamship, making Essington a port of call on its southern run from Alaska waters.

When all was fast, Clancy and Waldron stirred up Uncle Bill Rose. He came to full consciousness, with a wry face and all the symptoms of the usual alcoholic reaction. But he was able to take cognizance of things in general, as, being master, he proceeded to take charge.

Port Essington, the wharfinger, and the *Admiral* were singly and collectively wrapped in slumber. They had no freight to unload, and, if there had been, daylight was time enough for that.

"You might as well turn in," Uncle Bill instructed. "I'll stand by till morning."

"Those shotgun guards are paralyzed drunk," Clancy informed him curtly. "That's a lot of gold to be layin' around loose down there."

"I'll take a look at them shotgun men," Uncle Bill observed grimly.

The three descended to the main deck. It was an easy matter to slide crossbars over the cargo doors in the side so that no one could gain ingress except down the companion. Then Uncle Bill proceeded to arouse—with the toe of his boot—the guards to some sense of their business. Presently two of the three were awake, and decidedly panicky over their lapse. One was still maudlin drunk. The fourth was oblivious to his surroundings, and remained in that condition. But with two of them on the job, and Uncle Bill and a fireman standing watch, likewise, Clancy and the engineer sought their berths.

Clancy slept lightly at all times. The whirring of the *Admiral's* steam winches wakened him at daylight. He turned out, went down to the messroom. to find Uncle Bill attempting to drown out the effect of his potations with strong coffee. It was rather a silent meal. Uncle Bill ate morosely. By the time they had finished, their passengers were beginning to disembark, and the Skeena Transportation Company's manager was ready to begin the task of transferring the treasure from the *Bubble's* deck to the strong room of the *Admiral.* It was billed to the Dominion assay office at Vancouver. There awaited also a representative of the Skookumchuck Placer Company, a fussy person, with gold-rimmed spectacles straddling a bulbous red nose, a decidedly British accent, and flowing side whiskers. He hovered in the background, rubbing his hands together with extreme satisfaction as the gold boxes came up the gangway.

If those boxes had contained giant powder they could scarcely have re-

ceived more careful handling. Eventually, however, the last of them disappeared aboard the steamer. Captain Rose, still glowering and taciturn, followed the last box. He had to get a receipt for it to clear himself and the S. T. Co., and the purser of the *Admiral* flatly refused to sign for a half million, more or less, in raw gold unless he saw the yellow metal with his own eyes. So Uncle Bill had to be present at the opening of the boxes.

Clancy stood by a pile head overseeing the passage of freight into the *Bubble* for the upriver trip. Fifteen minutes or so after Uncle Bill boarded the *Admiral,* Clancy heard his name called from that ship's deck. He turned. A gold-braided officer beckoned him.

"You're wanted in the purser's office," he called.

Clancy ascended the gangplank, made his way to the designated room. It was not a large cabin, and the purser, the agent of the mining company, the S. T. manager, Uncle Bill Rose, and the four shotgun men practically took up all the standing room—save a small space in the center, where the gold boxes were piled.

Clancy had no more than framed himself in the doorway than he had a vivid impression that something was radically wrong. The attitudes of the men proclaimed that. The faces of the shotgun quartet wore the blankness of incredulous amazement, not unmixed with fear. The mine agent and the shipping manager were sputtering wrathful sentences. And the normally florid countenance of Uncle Bill was gray. He stood staring at the boxes, plucking nervously at his pointed beard. He bent an appealing eye on Clancy.

"Here, my man," the S. T. manager addressed him sharply. "Do you know anything about this? What is your explanation? Take a look at these boxes."

Clancy shouldered his way in between the shotgun men. His gaze fell searchingly on the boxes of gold. The covers were pried off and the contents laid bare.

But instead of the yellow glint of virgin gold he saw only oblong chunks of some cloudy-gray substance. Clancy laid hold of one piece and weighed it in the palm of his hand. Lead! Each open box revealed substantially the same. A collection of dross. Instead of a ton of gold, the treasure guarded by the shotgun men revealed itself as the cheap stuff of which fishline sinkers are made.

Clancy dropped the bar of lead back in the box, and grunted.

CHAPTER IV.

PINCHED.

"Well," said Clancy, at length, "who's the joke on?"

"Jowk—jowk!" the mining representative's ample side whiskers fairly bristled at this levity. "I assure you you shawn't find it a jowk, my fine fellow! My wo'd! A jowk!"

"Come," interjected the S. T. manager. "Speak up, Clancy. Those boxes contained approximately a ton of gold dust when they were loaded on the *Bubble* at Hazelton. How do you account for it?"

"I don't account for it," Clancy returned sharply. The man's tone nettled him—even while he was quick to realize the serious aspect of the thing. "How the devil would I know anything about it? My business is to assist the captain navigate the ship. I'm neither purser nor stevedore. I have nothing to do with the cargo. There's four men that stood guard with shotguns. Ask them."

"I signed for it at Hazelton," mumbled Uncle Bill. "I seen the gold with m' naked eye. It was in little canvas sacks. Some of it was fine dust and

some was coarse nuggets. And I watched them boxes carried aboard."

"We shall most certainly hold the Skeena Transportation Company responsible. You may be sure of that," the side-whiskered person announced spitefully. "This is the most extraordinary thing in my experience. A ton of gold lost—it's monstrous!"

"Gentlemen"—the purser of the *Admiral* spoke with polite firmness—"this is entirely your affair. I take it that you do not wish to ship this—er—stuff?"

"Certainly not." Both agent and shipping manager spoke as one.

"Then you may as well have it taken ashore, and do your investigating there," the purser continued. "We sail in an hour or less—and I'm a busy man. You'll excuse me, I know."

The manager of the S. T. Co. glared at his ship's officers. The representative of the Skookumchuck Placer Company glared at the quailing shotgun men. Then they favored each other with a glance of mutual antagonism. But they took the blunt hint.

"I'll have those boxes brought off at once," the shipping manager answered tartly. "Captain Rose, you and Clancy come with me. You, Mr. Pethick, if you'll be so kind. And you four men."

He led the way down the gangplank, paused to issue a muttered order to the wharfinger, and marched on to his office at the end of the dock shed. In the outer room, he requested Mr. Pethick and the gold guards to be seated for a few minutes. Then he motioned Uncle Bill and Clancy into his inner sanctum.

"Sit down!" he grunted.

He fished a cigar out of his pocket and bit the end off with entirely unnecessary force.

"Now," said he, "what happened on this trip?"

"Why, gal-ding it! I don't know as anything happened," Uncle Bill protested. "It's just a ordinary trip, like all the rest. All I know is that there's gold in them boxes when they come aboard. And when they're opened here——"

He threw out his hands helplessly.

"How many stops on the trip?" the manager fired another question.

"None," Uncle Bill replied briefly. "I loaded wood for a full run, at Hazelton."

"No other boats running close so that the stuff could have been slipped over while you were under way?"

Uncle Bill flashed a glance at Clancy—and the manager intercepted the look. "Something's worrying *you*." He leveled a forefinger, pistol fashion, at the captain. "Out with it. I know one thing: Your heaviest freight was whisky—this trip."

Uncle Bill bristled angrily. "From Hazelton to pretty well through Kitselas I'm at the wheel. Then I'm took sick. Sick to my stomach, and weak. After that, Clancy's in charge."

"You were drunk, you mean!" the manager snarled. "I'm onto you, Rose. You're an A Number One pilot—but you've been lushing too freely altogether of late. I've had my eye on you."

Uncle Bill gave him the lie direct, and rose to his feet. "I know m' business. Nobody ever see me drunk on watch."

The S. T. manager chewed reflectively on his cigar. He stared at the *Bubble's* master for a minute.

"You may as well go back to your ship, captain," he said evenly at last. "By the way, have you turned in your passenger list?"

"I have!" Uncle Bill snapped.

"That'll be all."

Uncle Bill made wrathful exit.

"Now, Clancy," the shipping manager began, as the door slammed shut, "you seem to have been in charge most of the trip—Rose *was* drunk, eh?"

"He was well able to handle the boat, until he took sick," Clancy evaded. "A man isn't drunk if he can steer a boat through Kitselas. I was in the pilot house when he keeled over. It was a kind of dizzy, fainting spell. Anybody's liable to be taken sick."

"Oh, yes, I know," the manager returned impatiently. "I understand. You're sailing under Uncle Bill, and naturally you're not telling tales out of school. But I've been keeping cases on him. We can't afford to trust lives and property to any man who won't confine his spreeing to shore. By Rose's own account, however, you were in charge from Kitselas down. You understand as well as I do that this disappearance of gold is a serious proposition. On the face of it, the lead was substituted between here and Hazelton, and the gold made away with. Haven't you any theory at all?"

"If we had made any stops at all it could easily have been packed off," Clancy said frankly. "There was nobody much to prevent. Uncle Bill was sick in his cabin. I was at the wheel all the time. Waldron had his hands full in the engine room. Outside of us, pretty much everybody was good and drunk—most of 'em laid out—especially these four shotgun men that was supposed to be on guard. But, as Uncle Bill said, we didn't make a stop. We didn't even slow down. There was no boat even ran alongside. When we got in here and tied up, Uncle Bill stirred up the guards, and stood watch himself till morning. I turned in and slept two or three hours. That's all I know. If there was gold in the boxes when they came aboard I don't know when or where it could have been taken out. Nor," Clancy added, as an afterthought, "how anybody could have got away with it after they'd done the lead-exchange act."

"A ton weight of metal couldn't very well be packed around in a suit case, that's sure. Why, it would take a team of horses to haul that stuff," the manager muttered. "Well, I guess that's all, Clancy. I don't see any light yet, though. It has certainly been a smooth job."

As Clancy walked out, Mr. Pethick and the four gold guards, now wearing a depressed, hangdog air, passed in. Clancy made his way aboard the *Bubble*. Uncle Bill stood in the wheelhouse door, clawing at his beard.

"Ain't it the limit?" he observed plaintively. "I can't figure it at all."

"Might just as well let the other fellows do the figurin'," said Clancy.

"That's all right for you," Uncle Bill growled. "But I stand a chance of losin' m' papers, an' gittin' a black eye generally, if this ain't cleared up."

He seemed to view Clancy with veiled suspicion, and that impression irritated the mate. He had his work laid out for him, and, since Uncle Bill apparently had no orders of any kind to convey, Clancy went back to his business of seeing that the incoming freight moved quickly. There was a goodly load of supplies for upriver, and there was need to keep things on the jump if they were to clear Port Essington, and make their way upstream to the point where they usually tied up for the night—for no man essayed Kitselas Cañon save in the light of day.

Clancy had occasion to walk around on the starboard side, after a time, along the deck where the passenger cabins opened forth. Like any ship's officer, he glanced in each open door. One was barely ajar, and Clancy, thinking absently that perhaps its inmate was still wrapped in drunken slumber when he should have been ashore, pushed the door wide with his toe. It was empty, the berth all disarranged. But Clancy's gaze, drifting mechanically over the interior, fell upon something that made him take a second look.

On the floor, just under the edge of

the berth, lay a small, oblong bit of gray stuff—just such stuff as he had only a few minutes since seen in the treasure boxes aboard the *Admiral*. He stooped and laid hold of it. And while he stood, with knitted brows, hefting the solid weight of it in the palm of his hand, he heard Uncle Bill bellowing for him above. Clancy threw the piece of lead back where he found it, and hurried to answer.

He found Uncle Bill pacing nervously by the upper deck rail.

"Say," the old man mumbled uneasily, "they've rounded up an' nailed every bloomin' man that had passage on this boat. They're goin' to search the *Bubble*. Look at the bull holdin' the slip."

The "bull' was a provincial policeman, whom Clancy knew by sight. The freight truckers were standing idly on the wharf. While Clancy stared, two other constables, followed by the S. T. manager and the Skookumchuck agent, boarded the *Bubble*. Another constable appeared at the gangplank. It looked to Clancy as if they were already under restraint.

For the matter of two hours, the party searched the *Bubble and Squeak* from steamboat to paddle wheel. Clancy, Captain Rose, and the crew waited uneasily. A feeling that something disagreeable was about to transpire grew upon Clancy—a state of mind that was strengthened by the hostile glance of "His Whiskers," as Clancy had dubbed Pethick, and the curious looks the constables bestowed upon both himself and the captain as they passed.

This feeling was presently confirmed in a most unpleasant fashion. The searchers filed out across the gangplank to the wharf. There an animated confab occupied several minutes, during which Pethick seemed to declare himself with an air of vicious finality. Then two of the provincial constables reboarded the *Bubble*. One went below. The other stepped briskly up to Uncle Bill Rose and his mate.

"In the king's name I arrest you robbery of gold dust warn you anything say mebbe used 'gainst you come 'long no fuss now." He spat it all out in one unpunctuated mouthful, and waved them toward the wharf.

Uncle Bill swallowed hard once or twice, and stared stupidly at his mate. The brick red of his face turned a sickly yellow.

Clancy flushed. To be arrested for robbery did not strike him as a complimentary proceeding. But secure in the knowledge that his skirts were clear, he merely shrugged his shoulders.

"Looks like we're pinched," said he lightly, and passed down to the wharf, the constable at his heels.

CHAPTER V.

A MERE COINCIDENCE.

Certain folk are prone to sneer at coincidence. These rather remarkable things, they will sagely observe, occur chiefly in books and yellow journalism, the product of some febrile mind. These narrow savants lose sight, or are ignorant, of the fact that short of sheer fantasy the human mind is incapable of devising by imaginary processes any situation which has not somewhere, some time, found close parallel in our multifarious human activities. So do not carp when I tell you what curious thing befell Adam—otherwise "Spike"—Clancy in a city and a latitude far south of Port Essington, in the heart of the following winter.

He was prowling moodily along the water front of Vancouver, British Columbia, fingering absently the fast-diminishing store of loose change in his trousers pocket. Clancy had fallen upon lean times. Work was scarce; the city full of idle men. He was reduced to

cheap lodgings, and cheaper meals. And at that particular moment his plight irked him a trifle more than usual. A murky, sodden sky lowered above. A raw, Gulf wind whistled in the Lion's Gate. Like a barometer, his spirits sank with the weather. And the capsheaf, as it were, had been the sight of Smily Brooks emerging from a first-class café on Granville Street, well clad and well fed. The contrast served to accentuate Clancy's moodiness, to force upon him more keenly a grievous sense of his own ill luck. As he often did when he felt at odds with the world, Clancy went down to the wharves and spent a long time staring out over the harbor.

A multiplicity of craft scurried about their several businesses; tugs, laboring with unwieldy log booms, the unhandsome chubby gasoline boats of Gulf fishermen, smart launches, suburban ferries. Burrard Inlet was full of swells and rippling wash from their activity. It was always full of interest to a man who knew boats and loved the freedom of a watery highway.

Clancy strolled out on a wharf. He was not looking for anything in particular. It was a distinct surprise, therefore, when his eyes gradually conveyed to his rather abstracted brain the message that they were resting on a familiar pilot house. Clancy grunted, and sought a better view. There was no mistake whatever, he perceived. The *Bubble and Squeak* lay moored beside the adjoining dock. She looked a trifle the worse for wear.

Clancy stared. It stirred unpleasant recollections. To be sure, that insentient hulk was nowise to blame. But the sight of her deluged him with bitterness and wrath, and he cursed the old stern-wheeler with a fine, upstanding imprecation which, while barred from public print, serves often to relieve a strong man in anger.

He did not perceive, and would not have cared, that he had an audience, until he heard himself addressed with straightforward directness:

"What did the *Bubble* do to *you?*"

Clancy turned, and saw a clean-featured young fellow, in a blue serge suit, a well-set-up man over average height, who might have been anywhere between twenty-eight and thirty-two, regarding him intently. He leaned against the wharf rail, drumming on it with the fingers of one hand, but his gray eyes bored square into Clancy's blue ones.

"I don't know as the darned old hooker herself ever did anything to me, but——"

He broke off hesitatingly. He had kept a close mouth on that unfortunate episode since turning his back on the Skeena. It had smoldered within, corroding his natural optimism, destroying his innate buoyancy of spirit. Coleridge's "Ancient Mariner" is, after all, but the exemplification of a universal trait. Few of us but find some vague relief in unburdening our souls now and then, to either friend or casual stranger. Clancy was no exception. Moreover he was impulsive.

"Aw, I was mate on the old bucket when she was running the Skeena, last fall," he blurted out. "There was a big consignment of gold dust stole, or disappeared, or something, one trip. I got into all sorts of trouble over it. Got fired, and arrested on suspicion of havin' something to do with it, and got blackballed so I couldn't get work on another river boat, if I was starvin' to death. That's all. The old tub had a Jonah aboard that trip, I guess. It riled me all up when I saw her just now. I wonder what she's doin' down here?"

The other continued his rail drumming. His eyes never left Clancy's face. He seemed to be speculating, appraising.

"Your name's Clancy, if I'm not mistaken," he said at last. "Mine's Whidby, Robert G. Whidby."

"You've got me tagged, all right, Mr.

Whidby," Clancy returned. "Did you happen to read something about that case in the papers?"

Whidby's face broke into a dry smile. "Closer quarters than that. I was the man who shipped that gold."

"What!" Clancy stared with fresh interest.

"Fact," Whidby replied, relapsing into his former gravity. "I dare say I was thinking pretty much the same things you were, about the old *Bubble*. That gold business put the kibosh on me, too. I'm a mining engineer, with a bit of a turn for hydraulics. I was in charge of the Skookumchuck Placers. Lost my job, and my reputation along with it."

"How did they manage to lay any blame on you?" Clancy inquired sympathetically. "The gold was loaded on the *Bubble*, all O. K."

"Oh, yes. But when a half million dollars' worth of anything disappears, there has to be as many goats as possible, you know. I was the responsible party at the mine end. I shipped the gold. Picked the guards and all. So they scalped *me*."

"Tough, all right!" Clancy knew how it went.

"There's a place a few blocks up here," Whidby said presently, "where we can have a drink, and sit down. I want to talk to you. I've been wanting to get hold of you for some time. I located Uncle Bill Rose, but he only made it clear that he knew less than anybody about what happened on that trip."

Whidby led him to a hotel. They cemented their acquaintance in the bar, and subsequently found a quiet nook and comfortable chairs in the lobby.

"You don't know me from Adam's off ox," Whidby began, when they were seated, "and I don't know you, except in an indirect sort of way. But I've got the impression that this thing put you in bad. It put a crimp in *me*, I know. And if there's a ghost of a chance, I want to clear it up. I've got to. I can't go to any reputable concern and ask for a position. There'd always be that mysterious disappearance of a ton of gold unexplained. No definite suspicion attaches to me, you understand. But the circumstances make it appear that the Skookumchuck Placers, Limited, couldn't trust me after that—and that's exactly the stand any other concern would be likely to take. It was a smooth job. But somebody was behind it. And I'd like to smell out that somebody's trail."

"So would I," Clancy muttered.

"And so," Whidby pursued, "if we sort of mull this thing over, we might happen on a ray of light."

"I'll tell you how it was, as far as I know," Clancy declared.

Thereupon, as circumstantially as possible, he related to Whidby every detail of that momentous passage, from the time Uncle Bill Rose keeled over in the pilot house until they were herded to the local lockup at Port Essington. There were bitter incidents, and Clancy grew hotly profane as he narrated his arrest and subsequent confinement.

"They had to turn us all loose at the preliminary hearing," he concluded. "There wasn't a scrap of real evidence to hold us on. That yapping little Pethick swore out the complaints, but that's all the good it did him."

"I see," Whidby nodded, "and yet I must say I don't see. There's a good bit of what you tell me that I hadn't heard, because it was all over when I came down out of the interior. Still, it doesn't sound promising. The gold disappeared while the *Bubble* was under way. Nobody aboard had so much as a trace of gold dust in his possession. It wasn't cached on the boat. What became of it? With the guards and everybody drunk, the gold could easily have been taken out of the boxes. And, by the way, one of those shotgun men

swore to me that he only took two drinks, and those two drinks put him down and out. He didn't even know where the liquor came from. One of the other fellows had it. But the point is, the gold vanished while you were running down the Skeena. Who got away with it? Who engineered it? And, short of dumping it into the river, what was done with it? A ton weight of anything can't be carried in your coat pocket."

Clancy stared a long time at his toes, frowning.

"I've got a plumb crazy idea," he said, at length. "It came to me in a hazy way once before. Your speaking of it being dumped in the river brings it to my mind again. It don't sound reasonable—but there isn't anything reasonable about the whole darn business. And I'm picking on a man I hate for the thief. Maybe my personal feelings influence me, but my finger goes straight to him. There's one or two items I didn't mention—little things that didn't seem to amount to much, but they begin to look bigger."

He paused a second.

"Fire away," Whidby encouraged.

Whereupon, Clancy told of his finding in a cabin occupied by one of the passengers a chunk of lead similar in form to those substituted for gold in the boxes.

"That didn't come out at the hearing?" Whidby asked.

"No," Clancy admitted, "and I'd almost forgotten it till just this minute. I want to tell you that I was good and nervous—and sore. Nobody else, constables and all who had searched the *Bubble*, said a word about it, and so I kept mum. It wouldn't help me, and I wanted to get out of trouble and stay out. But I saw it there, had it in my hand. I remember the number of the cabin, and I found out afterward from the steward who berthed in there coming down. Did you ever hear of a fellow named Smily Brooks?"

"Uh-huh. Gambler. Sure-thing man. Got quite a reputation as a plunger around Hazelton," Whidby nodded. "Everybody in the Omineca and Skookumchuck country knows him. I've seen him. Husky brute. Heavy-set. Supposed to be an ex-pugilist."

"That's him. He had number nine from Hazelton to Port Ess," Clancy said. "I don't know of anything I'd like better'n to hurt him good and plenty. He tried to come some of his smooth work in a poker game I was mixed in once. I was all lit up at the time, or I wouldn't have been in his blamed cinch game. He give me a *hiyu* lickin'. I wouldn't have minded that so much, but when I'd been properly beat up, he and a side kicker threw me out, and managed to frisk me for every cent I had while they were doin' it. It's no joke to be broke, in a strange camp. Maybe I'm extra anxious to get even—but I'm tellin' you straight about this lead business."

"It establishes a connection, all right," Whidby mused. "But I still don't get your drift."

"Wait. Here's my idea, crazy or not, just as you like," Clancy continued. "It come to me hazy once before, as I said. Your askin' what become of the gold, short of dumping it in the river, sort of brought it to a head. Now, suppose—well, first, here's Sand-fly Bottoms"—he fished an envelope out of his pocket and penciled a rude sketch of that area—"right here is where I thought I heard a splash that night. I laid it to my ears. I was worried about things—everybody drunk, and the captain sick, y' know. And when the searchlight showed nothin', I forgot about it.

"Suppose, now, a bunch of four or five hard citizens plan to get off with this big consignment of gold. They wouldn't try it without some plannin',

They know the Skeena River like a book. They know the ordinary holdup won't work. It's a big thing, and they aim to play safe. Smily Brooks has got brains as well as muscle. He's done some queer strokes of business up North, but nobody ever put anything on him. He's wise as a wolf. They can't grab a ton of gold and make a get-away.

"Suppose they come aboard at Hazelton, four—five—whatever number was enough to do it with a rush, pack their suit cases aboard full of lead—gettin' the lead into their cabins would be dead easy. Nobody ever pays any attention to passengers comin' on and off at Hazelton. They watch their chance, get everybody drunk with doped whisky—Uncle Bill plays into their hands by bein' both sick and drunk—and switch lead for gold. Maybe they put the gold in heavy canvas sacks—maybe they've got boxes all ready for it. That don't matter. The main thing is, they've got it.

"The next thing is some safe place to put it, where they can come and get it when everything has died down. And," Clancy tapped the envelope thoughtfully with his pencil, "the safest place of all would be in the bottom of the Skeena River—if they picked the right spot. And they couldn't find a spot more made to order than along Sand-fly Bottoms. We run close inshore; the bottom's gravel, no sand or mud; and not too deep. That's where I heard that splash. Why couldn't it have been a box or a sack, that they'd let go a little too swift? There you have my crazy idea in a nutshell. They got everybody safely stored away with doped whisky, opened the boxes, put in their lead, and sank the gold opposite Sand-fly."

"By the great horn spoon," Whidby murmured, "it's plausible as well as possible! Hang it! you must have it about right, Clancy. It can't be accounted for by any other hypothesis, for one thing. But—man alive, they may have raised it long ago!"

Clancy shook his head.

"If Smily Brooks was in on the deal he'd be among those present if there was any move made. He came straight to Vancouver after the hearing. He's here yet. I saw him on the street today."

"But his partners might," Whidby frowned.

"He wouldn't trust 'em," Clancy declared. "Besides, even if they'd dare take a chance so soon after all that fuss, it was too late to be monkeyin' along the Skeena when the magistrate got through with us. Anyway, they'd be scared. They'd think the authorities would be watchin' 'em—which they probably are; and me, too. No, if my theory is correct, they won't make a break for it before spring. And they'll be blamed careful how they go at it, too, believe me!"

Whidby slumped in his chair, deep in abstraction for fully five minutes. Then he straightened up, with a self-conscious grin.

"Huh," he grunted; "a man is a queer bundle of contradictions. I handled that stuff like so much gravel when I was up there, and never thought anything about it. And I was sitting there thinking how easy it would be—if you've guessed right—for us to go up there and help ourselves to the gold those thieves stole off the *Bubble.*"

Clancy stared, and Whidby chuckled his amusement.

"Yes, sir, I actually did review that notion for a minute," said he. "Of course, it was a mere vagary—but it goes to show how the possibility of unlimited loot appeals to a man. I can make a pretty decent income out of my profession—if I had a clean sheet to follow it—leaving the ethical phase of such a stunt entirely aside. I'm glad I met up with you, Clancy. I tell you

what: I've taken a cottage out in Kitsilano, and my sister is keeping house for me. Come on out home, and we'll talk about this thing over a pipe."

Over Clancy's demur, Whidby haled him into the street and onto a green-labeled Kitsilano car. And Clancy, who was a bit shy of women, spent more time on the ride speculating on whether he was about to encounter an old maid or a young, and whether she would fix a supercilious eye on his rather worn suit, than he did thinking about the lost ton of gold.

CHAPTER VI.

MARKING TIME.

In seven years of fending for himself, and those seven years spent mostly on coastwise steamers and northern river boats, Clancy's opportunities to meet women had not been over plentiful—particularly women of the sort he found himself rather awkwardly bowing to in the tiny-roomed Kitsilano cottage. Clancy had jumped from his unfinished last year in high school right into the thick of a man's fight to make his way in the world, with neither kith nor kin nor patrimony behind him. Women had had no part in that struggle.

Now Helen Whidby affected him like some strange intoxicant, stirred him with a queer, disturbing thrill—as if some subtle galvanic action took place when her soft, warm fingers clasped his for an instant. Probably it is the multi-millionth time the touch of a woman's hand has set up those unescapable reactions. But it was new to Spike Clancy. She was undeniably beautiful, a beauty of blended coloring and lissome symmetry of body. But he had seen women of passable beauty before, without any unprecedented quickening of his blood.

Whidby was full of talk and plans. He prevailed upon Clancy to recount for his sister the tale of that memorable night on the *Bubble,* and go once more over his new-developed theory. For the best part of two hours they thrashed over the matter of that missing ton of gold. Then Helen betook herself into another part of the house. Clancy would have gone shortly after that. He had talked himself out on the gold subject. What he craved was action, a chance to do something. But Whidby would not hear of his going.

"Dinner will be ready pretty quick," he protested. "No use rushing off. There's no such thing as formality in this establishment—besides, I want you to stay." And when Helen, who had evidently overheard, appeared in the doorway and observed, smiling, "I'm cooking for three, Mr. Clancy," he settled back in his chair.

Darkness, punctured regularly by rows of arc lights criss-crossing the peninsula, had settled over the city in an inky smudge when Clancy took his leave. Back in the stuffy room, where he made his quarters, Spike cast himself on the decrepit bed and glowered his aggravated discontent at the ceiling.

By contrast with Whidby's cottage, his lodging filled him with disgust. Here was only the meanest of shelter, sordid and ugly. A bed that groaned at the slightest movement of his body; a scarred old dresser with a broken glass; a washstand on the border of collapse. Well, a man couldn't expect much for two and a half a week, Clancy told himself bitterly. He had to get a job in short order, or he would not have even that. And with this dispiriting reflection, Clancy shut his eyes against the grimy wall paper and dirty woodwork of his room. Strangely enough, he could not shut out of his mind's eye a persistent vision of Helen Whidby. He told himself that it was silly. Her red lips smiled tantalizingly, mocking him with their kissable curves. Slum-

bering instincts awoke, urging, insistent, amazing him and puzzling him with their intensity. Did all men, he wondered, have a passion for some particular woman thrust upon them so suddenly and with such fierce longing? Undeniably, it was sheer folly. But a cat may look at a king.

Clancy was depressed, and very lonely, and surely Helen Whidby was worth while to look upon. She had her brother's clear, gray eyes, big, expressive eyes that met a fellow's without any archness or evasion. She was slender, graceful, womanly, yet withal giving a hint of virile strength, of pliant muscles coördinating perfectly under that smooth skin. Clancy had the eye of an eagle, the faculty for comprehensive detail. He missed nothing about her. He could have told off the varying shades the lamplight brought out among the deftly twisted coils of her heavy hair, reeved in tawny strands about her head.

"Ugh!" he shook himself. "I'm the limit. Moonstruck, I guess. Daydreaming, that's what. Just because a good-looking girl smiled my way. I'd better be thinkin' about a job."

But Clancy's mind persisted in harking back. And, perhaps, with not so much irrelevance, he wished he were a little less shabby, a little less near to the frayed and tattered stage of an ill-used wardrobe. He resolved to rustle a job if he had to fight somebody for it. With that uppermost in his mind, he turned in and gradually fell asleep.

He had a cordial invitation from Whidby to run out the next day, or whenever he felt like it. They had talked, to be sure, and various plans had been tentatively projected. But beyond the certainty that they would do *something* to clear up the mystery of the vanished gold consignment, nothing definite had come of their evening's talk.

When Clancy had eaten his breakfast next morning, he was tempted to turn his footsteps out Kitsilano way. He had laid awake a long time before daylight, mentally spreading a net that would sweep in Smily Brooks and the stolen gold when spring came. But a swift revelation of the magnet that really drew him changed his mind. Clancy had seen other men make fools of themselves over a woman. *He* was not going to be included in that numerous class. He was too keenly conscious of the fix he was in. He esteemed himself a sorry figure—all but broke, his one decent suit fast nearing a disreputable aspect, a marred personal record behind him. That arrest and three weeks' confinement burned in Clancy's recollection.

"No, sir. Me for a job!" he said to himself.

So once more he made the rounds of five separate places where he had in an application for work, only to experience a discouraging turndown.

Following that, he bought a paper, and set out in quest of certain jobs advertised therein. He walked himself to sheer leg weariness over miles of concrete sidewalk, all for nothing. It seemed to Clancy that half the population of Vancouver was job hunting, and that whenever a job offered most of them were there first. Which is apt to make things look gloomy to a man with only six dollars in his pocket—and no possible source of more except through the medium of a job. For Clancy had already hypothecated his watch and overcoat, and other pawnable goods he had none. And it was early February, midwinter, the slackest of seasons in the rainy seaport town.

That afternoon he got the promise of work, quite by chance. He had been out in the wilderness of plain little houses south of False Creek, hard on the trail of a "rough carpenter wanted," only to find the place filled when he got there—as usual. Coming home, he walked, to husband a nickel.

And on the way, he stopped to watch a street gang at work putting in the concrete base of an asphalt pavement. A red mustached man in a dirty raincoat bossed the job with mouthy activity. Clancy, standing on the sidewalk, observed this individual size him up. Presently he walked over to Spike and asked:

"Want to work?"

"I do," Clancy answered as tersely.

"Kin you wheel gravel nine hours without layin' down on the job?" the red-faced man growled.

"If anybody else can, I can," said Clancy.

"Be around at eight in the mornin'," said the boss.

"You're on. What's the pay?"

'Three dollars. Forty cents overtime. Eight o'clock sharp, see."

The red-mustached foreman faced about to his gang. Clancy continued downtown. He had eaten nothing since breakfast. With a hard day's work in prospect, he treated himself to a substantial meal. Then he poked off to his lodgings. They were cheerless enough to keep a man on the streets during his waking hours. But he was tired, and he could at least sit down and rest.

But at the very foot of the stairs Whidby met him.

"Hello, tillikum!" he hailed. "Just up looking for you. Come on out home with me, if you haven't anything else in sight. I've got some news. Also, I'm hatching a scheme. Besides, I want to take your measure at solo this evening."

"I've got to go to work at the hardest kind of graft in the morning," Clancy demurred.

"Oh, it's early yet. We'll feed you at six, and let you off on the solo game. That'll give you plenty of time to get all the sleep a man needs. Come on," Whidby urged.

And Clancy, after a minute's hesitation, yielded. There was no pressing reason why he should not. A cozy place to spend a couple of hours, with cheerful company thrown in, was rather alluring. Once he started to work, he would have neither time nor the inclination to do aught but sleep and rest, against the next day's endeavor.

"The Skookumchuck Placers has offered fifty thousand dollars reward for the recovery of that gold," said Whidby, as they were rolling out the Kitsilano line. "Or twenty thousand for the capture and conviction of the robbers."

"Huh!" Clancy grunted.

"If you have it doped out right, there's a stake in sight for us, as well as getting ourselves cleared of suspicion," Whidby continued. "Twenty-five thousand apiece wouldn't be too bad. Eh?"

"I should say it wouldn't! But we haven't got much of a look-in yet."

They had to walk a matter of three blocks from the car line. A big, green, low-bodied touring car zipped past as they hopped off the steps. It sped up the street and halted before the cottage.

"Hello!" said Whidby. "I wonder whose high-class turnout is giving us a call?"

A man got down, assisted a woman out of the tonneau. They passed in the gate. The woman ascended the porch steps. The man halted at the top of the steps. Whidby quickened his pace a trifle. The couple stood talking, the man hat in hand. Then, as Clancy and Whidby drew near, he gave a last bow and turned away. Though still at some little distance, Clancy's keen vision identified the woman as Helen Whidby. The man hesitated an instant at the gate, seemed about to retrace his steps to the house. But he reconsidered that, and climbed into the car.

By then, as the machine started with

an accelerating whir, the two were almost abreast of it. A certain familiar appearance about that stocky figure brought Clancy's eyes searchingly, scrutinizingly, on the man. The round, sleek countenance showed in semiprofile for a moment, marking him beyond all doubt for Clancy. It was Smily Brooks.

He glanced sharply at Whidby. Beyond a slight puzzlement, that gentleman's features exhibited no hint of recognition. The motor picked up way, and scudded around the next corner. Clancy followed his host up the short flight of steps, filled with a sudden distrust.

"Hello, sis! Been having an adventure?" Whidby greeted.

Helen leaned back in an armchair, her hat in her lap. Clancy noted certain details: traces of dust on her clothing; a broken plume.

"A misadventure, I'd call it," she replied irritably. "It ought to be a penal offense for a machine to pass a street car at the rate some of these people travel. That green car knocked me down on Granville Street. Oh, it didn't hurt me much—except my feelings. But it jarred me, of course, and attracted a lot of disagreeable attention. And that man insisted on bringing me home. He seemed to be really sorry. I didn't fancy his apologies, though. I suppose it was the chauffeur's fault."

Clancy grunted.

"Who is he?" Whidby asked.

"There's his card on the table. I believe a policeman took their names and the number of the car."

"'Richard Atwood Brooks,'" Whidby read. "Careless beast—running around knocking people down with a sixty-horse-power machine. I ought to hunt him up and manhandle him."

"Oh, don't be silly, Bob. It was annoying, that's all. I'm not hurt."

"The plot thickens," Clancy remarked briefly. "The heavyweight gentleman with the green car may have been christened Richard Atwood—but up North they know him as Smily, Smily Brooks."

"The *devil!*" Whidby exclaimed. "I had an impression I'd seen him, but I couldn't place him."

"I did," said Clancy sourly. "I'd know his mug anywhere on earth."

"He said he was a mining man, now I think of it," the girl observed. "So that's your suspected gold thief. Well!"

She relapsed into thoughtful silence. Her brother growled intermittently about the incident. Presently Helen got up from her chair.

"My poor plumes!" she said, ruefully surveying her hat. "Still, a broken plume is better than a broken bone. Mr. Richard Atwood, et cetera, wanted to buy me a new one. I almost wish I'd inflicted that penalty on him."

"Feel all right?" Whidby asked.

"Oh, yes. I'm not so fragile that a tumble in the street puts me out of commission, you know." She smiled, and disappeared forthwith. Presently they heard her rattling kitchen utensils. Clancy and his host resorted to their pipes.

"By the way," said Clancy, "how did you happen to find out about that reward? Isn't the Skeena Transportation Company in on it? Didn't they have to make good the loss?"

"No; the S. T. got out on a technicality—that was where I fell down," Whidby replied. "My sending four Placers company men to guard it relieved the S. T. of anything but liability for ordinary freight damages—even though they had acknowledged receipt and agreed to transmit the gold as an extra risk. Some shipping quirk. The skipper of a Port Simpson boat, just in, told me about the reward."

"I see."

They lit their pipes, and discussed tentative plans for the spring.

"I keep wondering—taking it for granted that your river theory is cor-

rect—if it isn't possible that those fellows may get busy before spring," said Whidby. "Hang it! I get dubious about this thing sometimes. We know Brooks is here. But what about the rest of his gang? He didn't pull it off alone, that's a certainty. We ought to know who they are, and where they hang out—and we don't. We ought to have track of them, and know what they're doing. What's to prevent the other fellows from raising that gold any time?"

"If I'm right at all," asserted Clancy, "Brooks is the Big Tyee, the brains. A bunch like that would want to make their move together. Part of 'em wouldn't trust the other, see? Brooks wouldn't stick in Vancouver if that gold was being salvaged out of the Skeena. Not much! Furthermore, aside from the fact that it's such a big proposition that they'll step blamed softly, nobody is going to monkey around on the Skeena this time of year. There's ten or twelve feet of snow on Sand-fly Bottoms, right now—will be till late March. No traffic. For them to go pestering around there would arouse suspicion. They couldn't do it without everybody getting wise. In the summer it's different; there's all kind of people and outfits on the river, coming and going."

"That's true, too." Whidby nodded.

"So far as doing detective work enough to get Brooks' bunch tabbed, that would take money and time," Clancy declared. "I couldn't do it, anyway. They'd spot me first. Besides, I'm going to work, you know. Got to, to live. Believe me, if that ton of gold lays in the river off Sand-fly, it's dead safe, until spring opens. They might even let it go till late. But I figure they'll try to lift it before the June floods."

Whidby acquiesced in the logic of Clancy's statements, and they fell into desultory talk of ways and means. They would need a launch and a camp outfit. Also it would be compulsory, then, to know something of the movements of Smily Brooks and his confederates. All sorts of difficulties loomed up. More and more, as they thrashed the thing over, did it become patent that they would have to be guided by circumstances and their wits, rather than any cut-and-dried plan.

"We got to get on the ground without anybody knowing what we're there for," Clancy summed it up. "We should be fixed to travel fast and quietly. Find out when this bunch goes north—where they go—what they do—and keep our eyes open. We might head straight for Sand-fly and locate that gold. But if we did we'd stand a blamed good chance——"

"Of getting pulled for stealing it ourselves," Whidby supplied. "I've thought of that. If you have called the turn on what they did with the gold, we can probably find it. But we want the men, too. A clean sweep, or nothing. That's the only way I see myself getting squared up with the world at large. I don't want a nebulous shadow of something crooked resting on me all my life. And you've got some indemnification coming for what was handed you. Eh?"

Clancy nodded. Whidby had expressed the situation exactly. They were out to square themselves, to set the blame for ugly charges where it properly belonged. They had stolen nothing, but—Clancy particularly—they stood smirched with unsubstantiated charges of theft.

"What if, after all, it happens that Smily Brooks and his crowd *didn't* get that gold?" Whidby mused.

Clancy shrugged his shoulders. A poser like that he could not answer.

"If they didn't, who did?" he countered. "Somebody did, that's sure. And whoever it was, we're after 'em—like bloodhounds."

Helen called them to dinner in due course. Clancy ate, smoked a cigar, and departed, for the wheeling of crushed rock loomed momentously on the morrow's horizon. Clancy told himself it would be a back-breaking job.

Twenty-four hours later, he realized the painful truth of his forecast.

This was upon a Wednesday morning. Nightfall brought full comprehension of what the red-mustached man meant when he asked: "Can you wheel gravel nine hours without layin' down on the job?" Piles of crushed rock, dumped at some earlier period from wagons, lay along the street side. A coughing, rumbling, cylindrical machine, revolved by a gasoline engine, stood in the middle of the thoroughfare. Beside it was laid a ten-foot-square platform of plank. Into this grinding cylinder was fed the broken rock, cement, and water, which poured out the opposite side properly mixed for spreading. From the piles of rock it was Clancy's task to wheel barrowful after barrowful interminably, always in haste, to the platform beside the machine. Each load was a capacity load, a strength-sapping strain upon the arms.

Enforced idleness had softened the wiry sinews of Clancy. Hot sweat trickled down his face, exuded from his pores, saturated his underclothing. When the noon hour brought a breathing spell his fingers and the palms of his hands were reddened and sore from the shoveling. When six o'clock ended the day, huge white blisters had succeeded the warning redness, and his body was one intolerable ache.

That night he slept like a man exhausted, and rose at seven, with a fearful stiffness in his limbs. But as before he labored doggedly. The first week would be a physical hell, and Clancy knew it before he started in. But he had done such slave-driving work before. The watchful eye of the boss squinting for signs of "layin' down on the job" made him grit his teeth, and swear silent oaths that he would hold up his end. He knew that the job had fallen open to him because no man held it long—it was too hard, even for the "dagoes" and Greeks, who made a specialty of hard work. But Clancy meant to hold it down. He had to. Three dollars a day was a prize to be struggled for—in his circumstances.

"If I can just stick till my hands heal up and I get hardened," Clancy held communion with himself, "I can hold it down a month. Thirty days—ninety dollars. Fifty or sixty, counting out grub and room. Then I'll throw the wheelbarrow at his ugly red mug, and get something else."

Eventually that heartbreaking week ended, and Clancy was over the hump. Slowly the soreness was working out of his hands, and arms, and back. The torture of overexertion grew less acute. He foresaw that shortly he could finish a day's work only normally tired, not hovering on the verge of sheer exhaustion, as he had been, where it was a heroic effort to drag his body home to that dismal little room. The dignity of labor! Clancy had heard that mouthed from public platforms. He wished the originator of the phrase might be condemned to trundle a three-hundred-pound barrowful of crushed rock along an endless thoroughfare throughout infinite time—with a red-mustached man at his heels grumbling: "Keep 'er movin'. Keep 'er movin'."

He took his four days' pay—munificent twelve dollars!—got a bath, a shave, and a porterhouse steak on his way home, and slept luxuriously far into Sunday forenoon.

Monday dawned with a fine drizzle of rain. The street-building crew labored through this till noon. But with twelve o'clock the drizzle freshened to a downpour, and the boss dismissed

his gang for the day. Clancy gained his lodgings soaked to the skin, changed his clothes, got his lunch, and found himself with an empty afternoon on his hands. Whereupon he yielded to an impulse that he had stifled the previous day, and took car for Kitsilano. By some freakish twist of British Columbia weather, the rain had ceased, dwindled to a gray, drifting fog.

When Clancy had traversed half the distance between the car line and the Whidby cottage, it dawned upon him that the machine he saw drawn up at the curb was directly before his destination. It was a big car, long, low-bodied, a vivid green. Clancy's face hardened a little. That same distrust he had experienced briefly a few days earlier returned questioningly. Were these people trying to make a goat of him in some obscure fashion? Were they really acquainted, even friends, with Smily Brooks? If so, why? Clancy could scarcely divine any possible object, and was a trifle ashamed of the thought. But he was sure of one thing: Smily was there with his big machine. And while, in a measure, it spoiled his desire for a sociable call, he kept on. Clancy hated to back down from anything.

Brooks it was in all certitude. As Clancy drew up to the cottage he made out the stocky figure of his man at the front door, partly obscuring an outline that must be Helen. Clancy had no more than established that certainty, however, than the door was closed. Smily descended the steps leisurely. This time Clancy met him at the gate.

"Why, hello, Spike!" that gentleman greeted.

Spike Clancy's temper was explosive, and the patronizing effort to be amiable on the part of this prosperous crook touched Clancy off quicker than a declaration of war would have done. The very soreness of his hands as they involuntarily clenched reminded him that but for Smily Brooks he would not be wheeling crushed rock, a common laborer on the city streets. So it is scarcely surprising that he resented according to his natural impulses.

Which is to say he took a quick step forward, shot his closed fist from the region of his hip upward, and planted it solidly and scientifically against Smily's chin. Clancy was a muscular man, excellently proportioned. He stood five foot ten and a fraction in his socks, and his weight was normally a hundred and eighty-five. His heart, as well as the weight and strength of him, was in that punch. Wherefore, Smily went over backward, sprawled his length on the sidewalk, and lay there motionless.

The chauffeur of the green car stuck his head out from under the top. His mouth framed itself in a round, astonished O. But he was a sophisticated youth, apparently.

"Some kick in that wing uh yours, old boy," said he admiringly, rather than otherwise. "Excuse *me*."

"Better stick him aboard and haul him off," said Clancy. "Tell him I said he's still got some comin'."

The chauffeur laid hold of his man, and Brooks, now regaining his senses, struggled, and was helped to his feet in a more or less dazed condition. If he recognized Clancy as his assailant he was too badly shaken to carry the matter further. The chauffeur assisted him to the tonneau, crawled in behind his wheel, and rolled away.

Clancy watched the car go. For a second or two he was on the point of turning back. Now that he had knocked Smily Brooks down and thus allowed a little steam to escape off his chest, he felt rather silly about doing it in so public a fashion. Then he thought better of retreat. If Smily Brooks had simply happened in there, he would be acting like a suspicious churl. And if there were any real connection be-

tween Smily and the Whidbys he proposed to find out why Bob Whidby had drawn him, Spike Clancy, into the game.

But these rather disturbing reflections departed from his mind in haste when he came to the top of the steps. The door was open, and Helen Whidby stood, with one hand on the knob, a little flushed, and smiling. Clancy's somber thoughts took swift wing. It was not in him to associate double-dealing with that winsome personality.

They shook hands. And then, somewhat to Clancy's embarrassment, the girl did not release his hand, but turned it over, and gravely—though there was a lurking twist to the corners of her red mouth—inspected his knuckles. It gave Clancy a queer, tender thrill.

"Ah!" she said softly; "I was afraid—I saw Bob hit a man once, and he peeled great pieces of skin off his knuckles. My, you did flatten that—that—sleek pig!"

"Weren't you shocked to death?" Clancy asked wonderingly. "I thought women always got scared at such stunts as that. It's no way for a gentleman to act, anyhow."

"I was glad—glad," she declared, with a vindictive earnestness that astonished him.

"Has that fellow been bothering you?" Clancy asked quickly. "If he has——"

"Oh, no; he was as polite—painfully polite," she smiled. "He came to inquire after my health. That's about the third time—and I've snubbed him each time dreadfully. I simply can't bear him. I hate him for the—the way he *looks* at me. Ugh!"

"The son of a gun!" Clancy murmured—quite unconscious of the fact that he himself was staring into Helen Whidby's gray eyes with frank admiration—which, presumably, had constituted Smily's offense. But the girl did not in the least seem to mind how much or how earnestly Clancy looked at her, for some reason or other.

CHAPTER VII.

CERTAIN PRELIMINARIES.

The street job carried Clancy well over into March. There were times when he was sorely tempted to quit. The work was simon-pure slavery, beyond any cavil. Always he was tired, aching, nursing a fresh blister or some accidental bruise. But all about him he saw men less physically able than himself tramping the city streets, half starved, half desperate, anxious to work, and unable to find work, human grist in preparation for the criminal mill. The man with nothing to sell but his labor power must work, steal, or starve. The dominant will to live gives him no choice. And jobs were scarce. A stroke of industrial paralysis had smitten Vancouver in the fall, one of those recurrent waves of business depression which economists can as yet neither satisfactorily explain nor forecast. Clancy stuck to his back-breaking job because the alternative was worse.

Week days he was too tired to do anything but swallow his supper and go straight to bed; he had no spirit for any diversion, craved nothing but rest. But on a Sunday afternoon, or sometimes when unusually heavy rains temporarily stopped the work, he would go out to Kitsilano. He was seldom frank with himself as to why he went. Sometimes, though, he took thought that he was laying up a store of pain for himself—when he acknowledged that he went there because of Helen Whidby, simply to be near, to admire, to gladden his eyes and his ears with the goodly sight of her, and the sound of her voice.

Bob Whidby had begun work on the frame of a launch. He could build it

himself for a third of what a boat builder would charge, he explained, and it would cost little to ship it north. It took a speedy craft to make reasonable headway against the headlong current of the Skeena, and Whidby had the lines of a boat which he prophesied would astonish the natives. He had dabbled a little in speed-craft technique. As a matter of fact, he knew vastly more about small water craft than did Clancy, sailor though that gentleman was. But the actual building taxed his ability, called for a niceness in fitting and a handiness with tools such as Whidby had not fully anticipated. Clancy strayed out one rainy afternoon, and, finding Whidby growling over a spoiled piece of oak, peeled off his coat and demonstrated that he could do a skillful job of timber fitting.

Helen sat on a bench, watching. When Clancy had marked out the tumble-home curve on the transom edge and sawed the difficult angle and the equally difficult curve out to a hair-breadth exactness along his penciled line, she made a single comment.

"Bob," said she, "you may *know* all about boatbuilding and woodwork in general; but Mr. Clancy can beat you when it comes to *doing*."

"So I perceive," Whidby laughed. "I guess he's had practice, while I was indulging in theory."

The next time Clancy came out—the Sunday following—Whidby opened up an avenue of escape from the wearisome toil of the wheelbarrow.

"Clancy," said he abruptly, "chuck that concrete job and help me get this launch done. There's more to it than a fellow realizes. And time's slipping by. It won't be so very long before we need it."

"But I've got to work," Clancy reminded. "Gee whiz! I've only got enough ahead to get some clothes. And I have to live, besides."

"Of course. But your time is worth money on this boat," Whidby countered. "Certainly I don't expect you to abandon a paying job to help me do this. As a matter of fact, if you don't, I'll have to hire a boat builder. I won't get it done in time by myself. I can see that. I'm too slow. I spoil things so often, and have to do 'em over."

This was quite true, and Clancy knew it. In the end, he allowed himself to be persuaded. He was to work on the launch, taking his meals with the Whidbys, and rooming downtown, and he was to be paid two dollars a day. Clancy's conscience rather smote him, and he said so frankly. It devolved upon Whidby to finance the Skeena expedition in its entirety, and he felt that it was hardly fair for him to draw pay for work by which he would be benefited fully as much as the man who paid him. But Whidby quite openly bared his resources, and put it in a way that eased Clancy's scruples. He had a little money—a matter of sixteen or eighteen hundred dollars.

"I don't see anything but to gamble it boldly on this," he explained. "My earning capacity is big enough, once I get rid of this nasty little black mark against me. This reward is legitimate, and I have no scruples about collecting it. It won't be any more than a proper reminder to the Skookumchuck Placers that they were a bit too hasty in their action. You were the first person to shed a glimmer of light on this gold mystery. We've got to work together for our common good. It's a mere chance that I happen to have money to work with and you have none. Whatever expenses we incur, you'll easily be able to pay your share if we come out on top. If we fail, why, we'll be companions in misfortune, that's all. So don't be squeamish about taking pay for work performed. I'll have the launch, whatever happens; it will be an asset, you see, aside from our undertaking."

So Clancy lost no time about throwing up the street job, and the launch grew rapidly in his deft hands. The latter days of March saw them ready to install the engine—a lightweight, high-grade, thirty horse-power machine that made a terrible hole in Whidby's diminishing bank account.

"But," said he, "we've got to have speed, and a fellow can nearly always get his money out of a first-class article. It's a cinch that we should be able to show our heels to anything on the Skeena, barring one or two of the fastest stern-wheelers."

By that time, spring was almost at hand. After that summary knock-down at Clancy's hands, Smily Brooks paid no more calls at the cottage. Nor did either of them see him again except once or twice passing on the street downtown. But it behooved them to keep track of his whereabouts, which they easily did. And with the first tentative approach of spring Whidby left Spike to put a few minor touches on the launch, and busied himself with a little detective work. None of the Brooks gang would know him, and it was almost a certainty that they knew Clancy only too well by sight. The first four days his sleuthing accomplished nothing of any moment. Then he absented himself from home one night, and burst in on Clancy and Helen just as they sat down to dinner the next evening. He was big with news.

"I've got three of them tagged," said he, before he was out of his overcoat. "And it's dollars to doughnuts you've had the correct idea all along, Clancy. There's Brooks, of course, a fellow named Wright, and a big Swede called Jurgensen."

"I remember the Swede," Clancy nodded. "He was a passenger on the *Bubble* that night. He's a deep-water man—once second mate on a British square-rigger. Quit his ship in Seattle to go on a gold stampede to Teslin Lake. Wright I don't know by name. Go ahead."

"Well, I got 'em spotted fairly easy," Whidby continued. "Yesterday they took a launch and went off toward Bowen Island. I hired a boatman and followed them, to see what they were up to. They tied up in a cove this end of the island. We went on, and sneaked back after dark. What do you suppose they were up to? Practicing in shallow water—with a diver's suit and apparatus."

"I guess that's plain enough," Clancy observed.

Whidby was glowing with achievement, and the girl, too, betrayed more than a trifle of eagerness. But it did not excite Clancy in the least. He had expected nothing less than absolute confirmation of his theory—both as to the men and the method. There was no element of surprise for him in the news. But Whidby was hugely exhilarated.

"They're going to do something pretty quick," he declared. "We've got to get north. Right away. We've got to beat them to it."

CHAPTER VIII.

ON THE GROUND.

The upshot of the council they held far into that night was a decision to get on the Skeena River without delay. Better be ahead of their men than behind them, Clancy argued, and Whidby agreed.

The shipment of the *Shadow*—which Helen had offered as a highly appropriate name for the launch, in view of her mission—occupied them on the morrow. It was Tuesday, and a steamer sailed for northern ports at flood tide on Friday morning. They requisitioned a team and a heavy truck, hauled the launch to the dock, from whence she was lifted by a steam hoist to the steamer's boat deck. Then there

was nothing to do but board their ship at the sailing hour.

Clancy's preparations for travel were simplicity itself. He packed his few belongings in a worn old grip and crammed the surplus in a sailor's ditty bag of heavy canvas—a twenty minutes' job. Thus he was ready for the road, no matter where it led. He did this the evening before sailing, and then went out to Kitsilano principally because he had nothing else to occupy his time.

He found Bob and his sister in the midst of a dispute that was verging upon the politely acrimonious; a circumstance which rather disturbed Clancy, who had heretofore seen nothing between them but perfect harmony. The nub of the matter was that Helen had determined to go north with them, and her brother was quite set against any such arrangement.

"You can't go up the river and camp with us," Whidby declared tartly. "That's out of the question. You couldn't possibly help, and you could easily be a decided handicap. Any old sort of rough stuff may be pulled off before we get through. And Port Essington is no place for a girl to live alone. Is it?—you know what sort of a hole Essington is, Clancy."

But Helen saved him from committing himself on either side. She cut in determinedly before Spike could make any reply.

"You're simply wasting your breath, Bob," she said. "I'm not going to be left here to stew, and worry, and die of loneliness. You know you can't scare me by preaching the undesirability of out-of-the-way places—I've gone with you to live in rougher camps than Port Essington could possibly be—and you were quite glad to have my housewifely services, thank you. I'm as much interested in the outcome of this as you are. I don't want to burden you with my presence—though I'm quite sure I'm pretty nearly as good a man in the woods as you are, Mr. Bob. But I am going to be on the ground. I can get a cabin and live in Port Essington a lot cheaper than I can live here. I'm entirely capable of looking out for myself, and you know it. Anyway, what's the good of quarreling about it? I'm going. I've got my ticket and berth. How are you going to stop me? Don't be silly."

Miss Whidby had something of a temper as well as considerable determination, Clancy observed, with secret amusement—an attitude quite common to a man when a woman's wrath is visited upon the other fellow's head. Whidby subsided with an unintelligible growl. And Helen poked fun at him until he became good-natured in sheer self-defense. Then all three of them set forth and indulged in the mild dissipation of visiting motion-picture shows downtown until bedtime.

The inside passage to Port Essington is a panorama of scenic grandeur—in decent weather—a voyage of narrow passes, bold headlands, glaciers, craggy peaks rising sheer from a frowning shore line, with cascading streams laying threads of silver all down the deep green of the forested slopes. But most of this was shrouded in mist. The steamer decks were wet and slippery from a continuous rain. Always the foghorn lifted up its strident tones; and up the narrow sea aisles whistled raw spring winds.

All down the Gulf of Georgia this endured. They crossed the unprotected reaches of Queen Charlotte Sound in the teeth of a roaring northwest gale—a circumstance which broke the monotony of fog and rain with a swift visitation of seasickness upon almost the entire passenger list. Apart from that, it was a colorless trip. Clancy, being a sailor, was unaffected by the rough and tumble off Cape Caution. Whidby

and his sister maintained their sea legs, so to speak. The three of them spent a good share of their time playing cards in the social hall, when the two men were not secluded in some corner puzzling over what they should do and how it should be done.

Presently, through the fogs and rain of that somber coast, the steamer nosed her way into the Skeena's yawning mouth, and at Port Essington the voyage ended, so far as three people, at least, were concerned. They took quarters at a hotel where prices were the only modern feature. In a dripping rain, Spike and Whidby sought out a safe wharfage for the *Shadow*. Then the three clad themselves in oilskins and went in search of a cabin for Helen. Their search speedily ended at a two-room and lean-to shack of split cedar which Miss Whidby pronounced to be just the thing—once the moldy accumulation of over-winter abandonment had been cleaned out.

It took them two days to put the cabin in tolerable shape, with a cook stove installed and a few articles of rude furniture. Clancy attacked, with his ax, the heavy woods that rose like a wall almost at the back door, and soon built up a great pile of firewood. There was no particular need of urgent haste. Unless they sprouted wings and developed a magical faculty for making themselves invisible, Smily Brooks and his partners could not get up the Skeena except by way of Port Essington. Clancy hazarded the opinion that they would come north on a steamer. Once they struck the river, they would have to be watched.

But for the present there was no crying need of action. They increased the pile of fuel. The first fine day that came, they slipped the *Shadow's* mooring, chugged sedately upstream to a secluded stretch of water, and gave her a thorough try-out—reaching a triumphant speed of over twenty miles per hour, with astonishing stability and dryness for a craft of her design.

"She sure doesn't look it," Clancy remarked, when they tied up. "She's built and finished so plain that she looks like an ordinary water plug. You'd figure her about a nine miler—on looks. But she can certainly go some."

And when all that was done, the two began to grow restless. They had marked time for months, and they were impatient for results, for action. So, upon a dull morning in April, blanketed by the mist that hung always over the lower Skeena, they slipped away from Port Essington, a simple wall tent, a roll of bedding, and a month's grub stowed in the *Shadow's* narrow cockpit.

They had devised a plan which seemed to them well fitted to guard against unforeseen developments. They were bound for Sand-fly Bottoms to set up a camp opposite the place where Clancy had heard that splash in the night. Clancy was to stay and await the next move, while Whidby would return to Port Essington, and, when the Brooks contingent disembarked, he would slip away and join Clancy. It was tolerably certain that none of the looters knew Bob by sight, and he could more easily than Clancy manage a stunt of that sort without arousing their suspicions.

They ran at moderate speed to conserve their gasoline supply, hugging the slacker shoal water inshore. That afternoon Clancy turned a point, and opened out the long stretch of the Bottoms. He gave the motor a little more gas, and grinned reminiscently ahead.

Thirty minutes later he swept in a wide turn out into the river, and pointed straight for shore, slowing down till the launch merely crawled.

"Here we are, as near as I can locate it," he said. "We may be floating right over that ton of gold, eh?"

They stared curiously overside. The Skeena seldom ran clear, and there had

been heavy rains. At that season it is always raining, or about to rain, in that region of rugged mountains and gloomy forests. The stream was a roily, dirty flood, thick with silt and the stain of yellow clay.

"It sure is not goin' to be visible to the naked eye," Spike commented.

"I should say not. It begins to look more like a needle in a haystack than ever," Whidby murmured.

His eyes traveled over the hazy sweep of the river, and he shook his head doubtfully.

"Aw, I don't think it'll be much of a trick for them," Clancy observed, just as the *Shadow's* forefoot pushed gently into the narrow, sandy strip of shore. "It's a safe bet they know within a hundred yards of where they dumped it. They've got some sort of a landmark to work on, you can be pretty sure. They wouldn't just heave it over regardless of everything. And with a diver's suit to walk on the bottom, it would be easy—for them. *We* don't have to locate it."

"That's so," Whidby laughed, as they got ashore. "But suppose we could? That's some chunk of money—a ton of gold. We might get away with it ourselves."

Clancy grinned, but forebore comment.

They picked their camp ground, deep in a grove of hoary old cedars, moss-festooned giants standing three hundred yards back from the river bank. And when their stuff was carried there—no easy task, what of the undergrowth and a tangle of driftwood cast up on the flat by high water—they sought out a good hiding place for the *Shadow*. She had to be kept well concealed. And luckily, a short distance downstream they found a heavy growth of alder drooping branchily out over the water. Behind that leafy screen, the inconspicuous hull of the launch was totally hidden. One had almost to lay hand on her to know she was there.

Whidby stayed the night, and timed his departure next day to bring him into Port Essington after dark.

CHAPTER IX.

SHIPS THAT PASSED.

Clancy spent an uneventful ten days alone—ten days of dreary weather, fog, driving rain squalls, sleet. Gloomy skies lowered above, eternally dripping; gloomy woods, immense, sepulchral in their shadowy silences, surrounded. Clancy was no hermit by inclination, and he chafed mightily against inactive monotony and loneliness. The giant cedars lifted all about his camp, so that even midday was gray and dusky as the nave of some huge cathedral. It affected him depressingly, so that he spent no great share of his time in that cloistered shade, preferring rather to fare forth through the dirty weather clad in oilskins and from some chance clearing scan the river with a powerful telescope that Whidby had included among the equipment.

But his eyes alighted upon nothing that lived or moved during that ten days—except two upbound stern-wheelers. Going down, they passed in the night, always, the slow *whoof, whoof* of the exhaust, and the dull thrash of the wheel bringing him to his elbow out of a sound sleep. Otherwise, the woods masked the land impassively. Through those forests and thickets prowled bear, and cougar, and the gray wolves that lifted melancholy, sobbing complaint to the stars or the clouded skies at night. But Clancy saw none of them. Forests illimitable, of tremendous cedar and fir, floored with thick moss and the rotting litter of sunless years, and the gray river splitting the hushed green area of it all—that was his outlook and his environment.

To keep himself from morbid reflec-

tion, he felled a suitable tree and fashioned with his ax a twenty-foot dugout such as the Siwashes use. It served to kill the time, and he conceived that it might perhaps be useful. But even so, the days dragged heavily.

Wherefore he experienced almost a juvenile excitement, when, upon a sunny forenoon, his glass picked up the *Shadow* scooting around the lower point long before she was apparent to his naked eye. He lay and watched, marveling at the speed of her. She lifted her nose clear of the water, and her hard-angled bilges sheared off the top of her bow wave and flung it in a thin sheet of spray to port and starboard, and the bubbling wake of her twinkled and sparkled in the sunshine. Now she was a speck; now she grew big in the eye of his glass, tearing along the reaches of Sand-fly; and now she was sliding in to shore, with Whidby waving his hand.

"You must have made an early start," Clancy greeted. "What's the good word?"

"I started two hours before daylight," Bob replied. "Sneaked out on the q. t. In fact, I rowed a half a mile or so before I started the engine. Brooks and his crowd are in Port Essington."

"Uh-huh," Spike nodded. "I thought they'd show up pretty soon. You didn't by any chance get an idea of what they'll do next?"

"Well, no," Whidby returned, "but I can make a guess, seeing how they're outfitted. They blew in with a forty-foot cruiser. She's a mighty plain-looking affair on the outside, but she's got genuine speed lines, if I'm any judge, and a cracking power plant. So you see, they're fixed to hit the high spots themselves, and they've got the advantage that they can run out to sea —they cruised up from Vancouver. Meantime, they're letting it circulate around Essington that they're headed for Copper River. The Swede says he and Wright have some claims on the Copper that show up good. They're predicting a stampede and a new camp on the Copper if their prospects turn out half as good as they looked last fall."

"It's a good bluff, at that," Clancy thoughtfully observed. "It explains their being up and down the river. It'll also help to account for them having gold dust—if they should happen to accumulate any. They'll be hard to catch. I wouldn't be surprised if they had a try at this pretty soon, now."

"I thought so, too, so I beat it up here to be ready for whatever comes off," Whidby responded. "Well, I'm empty; so let's eat. I brought up some more grub. Helen sent along a lemon pie for your especial benefit."

From that time on, the weather held good. The sun, which Clancy had begun to think had quit the Skeena region for good and all, put in his appearance regularly. No yellow ray ever penetrated the gloom under the primeval cedars, but there were pleasant spots along the bank where they could lie sunning themselves and keeping close watch on the river.

For a week it was a vain watch, so far as their quarry was concerned. The stern-wheel traffic increased as the spring business between coast and interior made demand for transportation. A few Siwashes stole by, furtively hugging the shore in their high-prowed canoes. Then one day, close in the wake of a steamer, came a gray craft that Whidby hailed with pointing finger.

"That's our meat," he whispered, lowering his tone as if his voice might carry over the intervening distance. He peered at the boat through the telescope, and after a little relinquished the glass to Clancy.

Spike brought it to bear. The powerful lens drew every detail of craft,

crew, and equipment up to him with startling distinctness. Clancy took her in, from stem to stern, from the little gilt ball atop of her signal mast to the turn of her bilge, with a thoroughness that left her lines and rig indelibly stamped on his memory. He could pick her out again unerringly, no matter what time nor in what distant port—for to a sailor there is individuality to a boat, just as there is to a person. But he was also profoundly interested in her crew. His brows drew together at sight of Smily Brooks lolling comfortably in the little cockpit aft. The big Swede, Jurgensen, helmed her. Wright and another man roosted atop of the raised deck. And there would likely be another below—the engineer. Five in all. Clancy scanned the faces searchingly. Though they were full a thousand yards distant, it was as if he looked at them across the breadth of an ordinary room. And each of those that he saw he recognized as a passenger on the *Bubble* that night of his last run.

The *Klickitat*—as the name plate on her bow set forth—was now drawing up abreast of them, and Whidby tugged at his elbow for the glass. Clancy reluctantly gave it up.

"They don't even slow down," Whidby remarked plaintively. "Blast 'em! I can see that red-faced Brooks pointing out places along here and grinning at his pals."

The *Klickitat* continued to hold fair on the steamer course. When the bend upstream hid her, Whidby put down the glass and looked at Spike.

"Well?" said he.

Clancy shrugged his shoulders.

"Search me," he replied. "We can't do a thing but wait and see if we're on the right trail. Maybe they'll go up a ways to fool anybody that *might* be trying to keep cases on 'em, and then sneak back here after dark. They can go quiet enough, you notice. Their exhaust must be well muffled. We could barely hear it from here, and she was hitting a pretty good gait, too. With that engine throttled to a crawl, you couldn't hear it a hundred yards. I didn't hardly expect them to drop the mudhook over where the gold is and go to salvaging it in broad day."

"Nor did I," Whidby replied. "But they wouldn't attract any attention by tying up to the bank in this howling wilderness. I didn't expect to see them beat it on past."

"If I were in their shoes," Clancy said reflectively, "I'd show myself at that steamer's heels as long as I could—if *I* were supposed to be on the way to Copper River. That was the *Rob Roy*, and she's no express train. Then I'd double back after dark. Oh, well, all we can do is wait. It's their move."

"They'd lose the game by forfeit, if it was checkers," Bob remarked dryly.

That night they brought their bed down from the tent and spread it in a thicket close to the river's edge, and spent ten hours of sadly broken slumber, stirring uneasily, wakefully, sitting up to listen, with straining ears, on the slightest sound. But nothing happened. A wan moon lit the river till past midnight, and a cloudless sky, full of bright stars, made outlook on the river tolerably plain until dawn. They got their breakfast then, and resumed watch.

That day passed, and another, and a third and fourth. The constant strain of expectant tension told on them both. Moreover, physical discomforts began to assail them more acutely. With the continuation of warm, sunny days arose the first of those winged pests that swarm in northern latitudes when summer comes—mosquitoes of a great variety, large and small, black and brown, bloodthirsty insects of miserable pertinacity. Also there was a small black fly peculiar to the region, of irritating quality. The two men slapped and

swore, and eyed the river malevolently for the gold thieves who did not come.

"By jinks, Clancy!" Whidby broke a long silence one afternoon. "If that gold is here, I move we locate it and help ourselves. I have my doubts about it being here, though."

Clancy took his gaze off the slender tip of a tall cedar, and regarded his partner curiously.

"Well," he replied good-humoredly, "you can lift it, if you want to—but excuse me. I'd rather catch Smily Brooks."

"It looks like we're going to catch anybody, doesn't it?" Bob growled sulkily. "I'm not nearly so sure as I was that the stuff's here, Clancy."

"There's nothing sure about anything, ever, any place. But if it isn't somewhere along here, we're all at sea, and we might as well shut up shop, because we won't do any business. At the same time, this is the logical place, Bob. Above here the river narrows. It's full of eddies and stray currents and sands that shift with every rise and fall of water. Those fellows know this river like a book. They didn't dump a ton of gold where it would be buried under sand and mud."

"Then why the deuce don't they come and get it? The June rise will come and send the Skeena over its banks, first thing we know. Then it's all off till fall."

"Maybe that's what they aim to do," Clancy suggested quietly. "How do we know? It's a big thing, and they don't have to rush it. Gold won't rot under water. Ten years from now it'll still be lying where they dumped it—if it's left alone."

"If we were *sure* it is right out here." Whidby flicked his thumb toward the river.

"We've got to take a chance on it bein' there—and wait," Clancy insisted. "We got to keep on waiting. What else can we do?"

Whidby returned to that subject again while they ate supper.

"Couldn't we locate it with a drag, you suppose?" he asked suddenly.

"What? Oh, those bags, or boxes, or whatever they put the gold in," Clancy replied. "We might, by chance, if we had any kind of a drag."

"I put a couple of dozen big sturgeon hooks in the *Shadow* when I came up this time," Whidby said quietly. "I guess they're still under the after deck."

He fell to snuffing the bowl of his pipe, staring fixedly into the dulling embers of their fire.

"I'd certainly like to nail Mr. Richard Atwood, et cetera, with the goods on him," he continued, after a long pause. "I suppose the thing to do is simply to lay for them, and when they do locate the stuff and hoist it aboard their cruiser, it will be our play to slip on ahead and have the constables nail them en route. But—suppose we found that gold ourselves, and hooked it out of the river before they got here?"

"Well, that would all depend," Clancy replied evasively.

The trend of Whidby's conversation disturbed him a good deal. He was no mealy-mouthed moralist, but neither was he a fool—and by virtue of certain irrepressible speculations and daydreaming that he himself had indulged in during those ten days he spent alone, he surmised uneasily where Whidby's talk ended.

"Hang it, this struggle for money is a typically predatory affair all the way through," Whidby burst out. "This gold—if it lies out here in the river—belongs as much to the finder as it did when it was filched from the lap of Nature in the beginning. It was Nature's bounty, a part of her magnificent abundance, as much so as all these huge groves of trees. It isn't man's product, his handiwork, this gold—nobody toiled and sweated for its creation, and thereby acquired in it a vested right. I wouldn't

consider it theft for us to take that gold if we could find it—any more than I'd consider it theft to wash a handful of nuggets out of one of these little streams. There are cases, you know, where possession bestows indefeasible title, both legal and moral."

"But it wouldn't be playing the game according to the rule we generally follow," Clancy argued soberly. "I never was stuck on the idea of letting a big corporation hog a lot of rich gold claims away from the prospector—which they do. But accordin' to the way things go, this stuff still belongs to 'em, to the Skookumchuck Placers, no matter how many times it's stole, nor where it happens to be cached. If I got away with a bunch of loot like that—darn it, I'd always be squirmin' inside about it. I know I would. I can't help it. Money means just as much to me as it does to anybody that ever struggled for it; but there's some kinds of money wouldn't do me any good. And besides, let me tell you right now, if anybody hurts me, I want to hurt 'em back. I want to have Smily Brooks lay in that stinkin' little jail where they put me last fall. I'd rather have the boys I know up and down the coast know I was on the square and got a dirty deal. Yes, sir, I'd rather catch these fellers and clean up this mess, than get away with all the gold you could pile up on a four-horse truck. Besides—don't we stand to get a good little bundle of coin out of it anyway? Your company wants its money back, and it's willin' to pay for the same."

Clancy hoped he had not laid it on too thick. He was far from an inflexible pillar of virtue. He knew, by reason of the labors, and hardships, and forced economies of his life, how dependable a possession was good yellow gold. It would get a man almost anything he wanted. Certainly Spike Clancy realized that quite keenly. And because he did realize it, he did not want to have the ease, and safety, and justification of such an act dangled temptingly before him. For honesty, as the term is commonly understood, had somehow become ingrained in Clancy. Perhaps not so much honesty as applied to property rights, as honesty of purpose, of playing the game according to the rules laid down, of justifying a trust, and being able to walk independently among his fellows secure in the sense that he had never betrayed a trust. That was his code, perhaps never consciously summed up in so many words, but nevertheless a working factor in his everyday life.

Whidby sucked silently at his pipe.

"Maybe you're right," he said. "But I'm afraid we'll lose out on this waiting proposition."

CHAPTER X.

THE FIRST NIBBLE.

Whidby did not open up that vein again. But Spike had an uneasy sense that he was thinking about it, and when a man broods over an idea it is apt to take rather a firm hold on his mind. The waiting and discomforts they endured made them both a trifle sour. It was unfortunate, Clancy reflected, but it could not be helped. They had undertaken a bigger and more complicated job than was at first apparent, that was all.

Over a week had now passed since the *Klickitat* drove upstream. It might be another week, or a month, indeed the whole summer might slip past before the Brooks crowd made the crucial move—or it might be any hour. They had to wait and be ready; that was their task. And to make things a little more systematic, they had taken to dividing the night into two watches, Whidby till midnight, Spike from midnight to dawn.

The third night after Whidby's tentative proposal to lift the gold, Clancy

heard the clink of metal offshore shortly after Bob had settled down in his blankets. He was sure of it, unequivocally positive, and he listened breathlessly for a minute. There was no repetition of the sound, or any sound whatever. But Clancy did not expect them to advertise their presence. The very nature of their errand would make them furtive and silent.

He leaned over Bob, to wake him. Then he stayed his hand. Whidby was sound asleep. If he wakened him, and it proved a false alarm, Whidby would growl, as he was getting into the habit of doing on slight grounds. Furthermore, Clancy felt that he could reconnoiter with greater ease and safety if he were alone in the dugout—it was rather a cranky craft.

So he left Whidby sleeping, and stole to the river bank, felt for the dugout under its screen of brush, and slid it softly afloat. He would have given much for a glimmer of moonlight through the cloud wrack that masked the sky. What with the clouds and the heavy timber lifting high along shore, the Skeena was black as a cellar. He could make out the bow of his canoe. Beyond that, the dark closed in impenetrably. Perhaps that was why they had come, why they had let the glimmering moonshine of last night go by. This was a fit hour of gloom for nefarious undertakings. Clancy wondered how, in that pit-black shroud of darkness, they would spot the place where the gold went overside from the *Bubble*. But that was their business, he decided; his to find out if they were there, and what they were about.

In this quest he was doomed to disappointment, though he drove the canoe upstream with silent, powerful strokes of the paddle, and alternately drifted down, listening eagerly, straining his eyes to pierce the dark. If the *Klickitat* had dropped anchor there, he was not going to be able to locate her, he decided, after two hours of fruitless zigzagging back and forth on the river. Perhaps they had come to the same conclusion, that it was too utterly black to do anything. Clancy finally developed the conviction that if he could not locate an object the size of that cruiser, neither could they locate the gold cache on the bottom—and with that he drove his canoe ashore. He paused once to listen, and imagined he heard the faint *put*-a-*put* of a gasoline engine in the distance. But he could not make sure. He gained the north shore easily enough, but discovered himself away out in his reckoning—three hundred yards below camp.

Clancy sat in a brown study the remaining period of his watch. He foresaw certain difficulties which should have been calculated upon before, and he discerned certain eventualities which he sincerely wished to dodge. And when sunrise awakened Whidby to the breakfast Spike had ready, he spoke his mind; a part of it, at least, after telling Bob of his fruitless scouting in the night.

"The mere fact that they were prowling around here in the night is good proof that we're not far out in our calculations," said he. "And while I was sitting around waiting for day, it struck me that we're working under too much of a handicap altogether. I've thought the same thing before, but it never seemed quite so important as when I was out there half expecting to find them at work with that diving suit. We've got no authority of any sort to act. In fact, we could easily get in mighty bad on this thing. Once these fellows lift this gold and get it aboard —good night. They're gone. We can't hold 'em up at the point of a gun; we got to have the law on our side to protect ourselves. We're taking too much of a chance if we put that off till they've turned the trick. Too much chance of a slip if we depend on getting

the Provincial Police out *after* they've raised the gold."

"Well," said Whidby, "what do you propose to do about it?"

"It seems to me," Clancy declared, "that the wisest thing is for you to take a swift shoot down to Port Essington and hunt up Barney Lisk—he's constable there, and he knows me; in fact, he's the fellow that arrested me last fall—tell him exactly how the land lays, and get him to come back with you, or send another constable along. I'm as sure as I ever was of anything that those fellows sneaked in here last night and pulled again because they found it too dark to do anything. If they were, they'll be back. They won't take chances on day work—but the first good night they'll get busy."

"But that means cutting up the reward," Whidby objected. "That fifty thousand dollars won't amount to much if you get two or three constables claiming everything in sight. That's what they generally do."

"Reward or no reward, we don't want to bungle this job, and let this bunch of crooks get away with it, now that we have got mixed in," Clancy continued tartly.

"They won't," Whidby growled. "But doesn't it strike you that a constable might find it hard to credit such a yarn as I'd have to spin?"

"Bob," Clancy declared earnestly, "with all the fuss there was about this gold shipment last fall, and with a fifty-thousand-dollar plum for the solution of the puzzle, do you suppose for a minute these constables will overlook any kind of a chance? It's a ten-to-one bet they are nosing around blindly trying to find out something on their own account. It's all very well for us to circulate a story that we're cruising timber for a big lumberman. But I'm marked, and so is Brooks and his bunch. You tell the facts to Barney Lisk, and you'll see him kick in with the one thing we need to back any play we make—the law. We got to have it. If we go on any longer trying to act outside it, we may find ourselves tangled up in it worse than I was last fall."

"I suppose it's the sensible, logical thing to do," Whidby admitted. "It would be a lot more encouraging, though, if we *were* certain the stuff was here."

"What makes you so blamed skeptical about that?" Clancy inquired. "We've gone over that ground a dozen times, and everything points to the one conclusion. I heard 'em last night—I'd swear to it on a wagonload of Bibles."

"All right, I'll go down and inveigle the constables into the game," Whidby conceded, after a minute's thought. "But I don't think it would be a good scheme to start now. If those fellows are laying up along the river, they might spot me leaving here—and shy off for God knows how long."

"Sure, you don't want to start before dusk," Clancy agreed. "You should know the river well enough now to be able to run it after night—if you go slow here and there. And there's not much chance of them hearing you; not with that under-water exhaust cut in."

"I guess I can make it, all right," Whidby returned briefly.

They loafed through the day. Clancy slept through most of the forenoon. While he was cooking supper, Whidby went down to the *Shadow's* hiding place. He came back after a time, carrying in his hand a cluster of sturgeon hooks, big, barbed things, with a three-inch curve.

"Yes, sir, I had half a notion we might make a drag with these and find that sunken treasure," he smiled. The bundle of hooks he threw carelessly aside at the base of a cedar. "And I still have that notion," he added pres-

ently. "It would be a joke on Richard Atwood & Co."

"It would be no joke on us if we got nailed while we were at it—or even with the gold in our possession," Clancy returned dryly. "About ten or fifteen years in the pen. No, thank you. I don't want to lay eyes on the blamed stuff till I catch Smily Brooks with it. It would be too much of a temptation, Bob, because I've got just as much a hankering for a lot of the things big money will get as any man could have. Gold's all right. It's a mighty fine thing—in its place. But grabbing for gold that don't belong to you has started lots of trouble here in the north—every place, I guess, where gold lays around loose to be struggled for. Look at this lot. See what it got you and me into. And all that bunch on the *Bubble*. Let it lie where it is."

Whidby eyed him thoughtfully, but made no comment. And presently, as the sun slipped down to the tree-rimmed horizon, they ate their supper. When the long twilight thickened, they pushed the *Shadow* clear of the alders, and, with the motor whispering at its lowest speed, Whidby stole downstream, the low hull of the launch masked against the blurred shore.

Clancy went back to his roll of blankets in the thicket, a trifle lonely, more than a little depressed.

Things weren't working out right at all. Queer, he reflected, how a man's mind twists and turns about a subject. Whenever he dwelt overlong on that sunken loot of gold—which he felt sure he could locate any time he chose to make the effort—when he visualized himself forever freed from hard work and all the world a field for his plowing through the simple medium of salvaging that gold which lay unclaimed and unguarded at the bottom of the river, he did not reckon the risks and dangers, all the intricate net of the law spread for his undoing. None of these things constrained him—and he knew they did not. There was always a way out for the man with nerve.

When he thought of that gold, there uprose before him also a vision of Helen Whidby. Because of her, and of what he had long ago recognized she meant to him, he longed for possession of just such a treasure as lay within a stone's throw of where he sat, in nine scant feet of water. To armor himself financially against the world, to give her and himself those things which otherwise he might only attain to through years of infinite toil, which he might never attain though he sweated out those years in faithful labor. Because of her, he desired that gold—and because of her, he shrank from taking it. Clancy may have overrated her influence. Within himself, at most times, there was positive negation of such an act. Still—— He sat there in the closing dusk, and wished the days of planning, and watching, and waiting were over, prayed that the whole proceeding might culminate speedily in clash and action, whatever the result.

The forecast that pleased him most was a clean slate for himself, and a measure of approval from her. Clancy was not a fool, for all his inexperience, in the feminine way. And Helen Whidby was neither a coquette nor a prude, but a healthy-minded, vigorous-bodied young woman who took no particular pains to conceal her likes and dislikes. Clancy was a poor dissembler himself. There is an art in repression which it was not in these two natures to practice. So that perhaps Spike had something more tangible than a mere vision to make him sit smiling and thoughtful in the dark—until the deep who-*hoo*, who-*hoo* of a horned owl perched on the tip of a towering cedar stirred him out of his reverie.

With that greeting from his nocturnal visitor came also another sound

—the sharp clank of metal out on the river.

CHAPTER XI.

CLOSE QUARTERS.

This time Clancy was assailed with no doubts. He had heard the metallic clink all too plainly. And he drew the conclusion that what he heard was the *Klickitat's* anchor being dropped. Clancy knew what he knew. They had a diving outfit. Therefore it followed logically that Brooks would anchor as near the spot as it could be guessed, and that the diver would explore the bottom with the *Klickitat* as a base. With a powerful incandescent bulb hooked up to the cruiser's dynamo or storage battery, he could have ample light over a working radius of at least eight or ten feet—since the Skeena now ran fairly clear.

So Clancy stuck his gun in his pocket, pushed off the dugout, and took up his paddle. He was not quite clear as to what he should do if he found them working, if he ascertained that they were actually raising the gold. He could scarcely capture them single-handed. More than ever did he realize the folly of attempting to cope with a situation of that sort without the strong arm of the law at his back. As a last resort he might try to scare them off.

Without being a dark night in the full sense of the word, it was still murky enough that a low-bodied, neutral-tinted hull like the *Klickitat* would merge into the river surface at a few feet. The sun had set in a clear sky, but with dark a thin mist had drifted up the Skeena. Clancy could make out the shore line after a fashion. On the water he could see little or nothing. Everything seemed to run into a gray blur, deceptive, distorted, shadowy. He guessed it to be a choice night for their purpose. They could get their general bearings from the faint shore line, and be all but invisible themselves. He was satisfied that when they dumped the gold off the *Bubble* they had some established landmark by which to relocate its resting place in the future. Clancy had a firm conviction that the gold—part of it, at any rate—lay about two hundred yards or so straight off shore from their camp.

He moved slowly out into the stream, paddling with sedulous care that each stroke should be silent. The correctness of his reasoning was presently demonstrated by a dim bulk looming ahead. Clancy's pulse quickened. He ceased to advance, remained stationary with slow thrusts of his blade to counteract the current, listening.

For a long time no sound reached his ears. Then, after an interminable period, a queer, muffled noise floated down to him, a regularly timed pulsation. Clancy had heard that sound before. He recognized it at once—the air pump that supplied the diver. It ceased briefly, and Clancy knew what he had heard was the preliminary testing. With that, it began again, and immediately Spike heard a faint gurgle of disturbed water. A minute later he could have sworn he saw a faint luminosity below and off the *Klickitat's* starboard quarter.

By now Clancy was tense with excitement, and resentful of his comparative helplessness. With a couple of constables now, he told himself, they would simply have to board the launch and nail their men in the very act. As it was——

He urged the canoe a little nearer. The regular beat of the air pump was now quite distinct, but the cruiser still remained a blur, and the figures that must be on her deck quite indistinguishable. The mist had thickened a trifle.

For the better part of an hour, Clancy hovered near, chafing at his forced inaction. Then the clank of the pump

suddenly ceased. By certain sounds he deduced that the diver had come aboard. Spike drove in a few yards, and held his own against the current, vainly trying to guess or see what was next on the program. Had the diver found the gold? He might even have already made fast a line to part of the treasure. In that case, the gray cruiser would make a clean job of it and slip away scot-free with the stolen goods aboard. He considered that possibility a minute —and while he considered there came over him a wholly uncontrollable desire to sneeze.

He struggled against it, pressing both hands tightly over nose and mouth. But there was no staying the involuntary spasm. He burst forth with a penetrating *ker-choo.*

In the dark ahead of him a red flash opened out, like some brilliant flower. With the flash and report, Clancy heard a bullet strike the water and ricochet with a long-drawn whine.

It had never been Spike's habit to turn the other cheek. One of his dominant impulses was payment in kind. He was dealing with folk already beyond the law, outlawed by their own deeds. And being fired upon, his anger flared like the red pistol flash. He heard one voice utter a snarling oath of protest, while he fumbled for his gun. Then he cut loose in the cruiser's direction. Three times he fired as fast as he could pull the trigger. He could not see her now. The current had gripped him. But he heard a sudden yelp. With that, the Brooks gang opened up. Orange-colored rosettes of flame blinked open and shut in the dark. Here and there on the river surface sharp flashes told of bullets striking. Once or twice they spatted the water uncomfortably close.

This concerted pistol work somewhat abated his ardor for retaliation. Clancy put by his gun, seized his paddle, and drove in for the shore. He recalled suddenly a big brass searchlight mounted on the cruiser's deck. With all that shooting, there was nothing much to be served by concealment, he reflected. And if they should think to switch that long beam on him, they could pot him with neatness and dispatch.

But evidently Smily Brooks had no mind to further advertise his whereabouts or business. Neither a glimmer of light nor any sound followed upon the last shot. The heavy stillness of the night mantled river and woods. Clancy drew his canoe up on the sand, and sat him down to listen. After a brief lapse of time, certain unmistakable sounds apprised him that the *Klickitat* was under way, downstream at that. He had terminated that night's work for the time being, and he experienced a mild degree of satisfaction. He had no means of knowing whether they had merely taken alarm, or whether his three shots had inflicted some damage, but he was quite sure they had not found time to raise more than a minor portion of that ton of gold—granting that they had located it and begun its recovery. He hoped that Whidby would get back with a constable or two before the *Klickitat* returned for another try.

He wondered, too, at their being scared off so easily. But he reflected that a night surprise would be rather disturbing to men engaged in an enterprise where capture meant long years in a provincial prison. Anyway, they were gone—that was the main thing, for the present. Clancy hauled up his dugout, and went back to his blankets, where he sat down to await any new developments. There was no danger of him going to sleep. The vanguard of the mosquito swarms saw to that.

At dawn he looked forth upon the river.

"All's quiet along the Potomac," said he—and grinned.

Then he got his breakfast. After that, he made his way over fallen trees

and through dense brush to a point a mile or so upriver where a jutting promontory cut off the view above. From that lookout, he swept the river with his telescope. But the *Klickitat* had betaken herself out of his ken. She was too big to hide under an overhanging alder like the *Shadow*. Clancy felt reasonably sure she was not within several miles. So he went back, and, curling up in his blankets, with mosquito netting draped over his face, proceeded to fall asleep.

By the end of the second day, Clancy had grown both uneasy and impatient. Whidby was long overdue. Barring accident, Clancy could not understand the delay. If the *Klickitat* came on another nocturnal visit, it was a ten-to-one shot that the Brooks contingent would surely be prepared to finish the job at all costs. In fact, Clancy could scarcely credit his scaring them off so easily. Of course, there was the chance that he had hit one of them. But he placed little faith in wild shooting. They had fired at least twenty shots at him—and nicked his canoe but once. He was duly thankful, however, that they did not renew the attempt. Also he was visibly choleric whenever he recalled that they had fired on him without warning or provocation. It was to be expected. Nevertheless, it made Clancy rather keen to hit back.

Eventually Whidby returned, scooting up to the *Shadow's* hiding place full speed, in mid-afternoon.

"You don't give a darn who sees or hears you landing here, do you?" Clancy remonstrated, as soon as he could get down there. "I see you didn't grab a constable."

"Safe enough running in here now," Whidby responded lightly. "The *Klickitat* and all her crew are in Port Essington—and I took good care they didn't see me leave."

"The devil they are!" Clancy growled. "I don't suppose you learned anything new, eh? What are the police goin' to do?"

"Why, I don't know that they're going to do anything," Bob returned slowly. "To tell the truth, I didn't put it up to them—for the simple reason that the two men stationed at Essington were both out of town."

"Then why in blazes didn't you get word to 'em, or stick there till they came back?" Clancy exploded. "Look here——"

With that he related as circumstantially as possible the rather exciting events of that night. Whidby leaned against the trunk of an alder, rubbing his chin thoughtfully.

"They mean to have it, all right, don't they?" he commented. "And that was rather a close shave for you. I don't quite know what to make of them. They're down there quite open and aboveboard. Blew in day before yesterday. And they are getting Port Essington worked up to stampede to certain placer diggings they claim to have opened up on a branch of the Copper. Darn it, they've got the gold to show. I saw Brooks myself spread at least ten pounds of dust and nuggets on the bar in the Union Hotel. Maybe they did get it lifted—and maybe this placer business is on the square, and they didn't steal the Skookumchuck gold, after all."

Clancy snorted disdainfully.

"Does a man go prospecting with a diver's dress?" he demanded angrily. "If they were peaceable prospectors, would they shoot at a man sneezing in the dark? Get out! What ever gold they've got, they got right here. But they didn't get much of that ton. They didn't have time."

"Well, they're claiming all sorts of richness for this ground they've got staked," Whidby reasserted. "They've recorded the locations in due legal form. And there's at least twenty men outfit-

ting to go in there. There must be something in it."

"It's a stall," Clancy declared. "They're going to get this gold—and they've got to have some way of accounting for it. That would be cheap insurance against suspicion—a sort of alibi—cheap, I mean, for them to salt a lot of ground along some creek. They could afford to throw away fifty thousand dollars' worth. I've seen a big camp started on less real gold. Being the original locators, it would only be natural for them to have the richest ground. And there you are—gives them license to have all kinds of native gold. Don't you see? These fellows aren't fools. They'll play safe right through. They can afford to—for half a million."

"I thought of that," Whidby rejoined. "It's a hefty job."

He stared out over the river for a minute, his face drawing into sullen lines.

"We don't stand to get anything but the worst of it, so far as I can see," he growled. "We're fools not to take that gold ourselves—if it's there."

Clancy made an impatient gesture.

"That's silly," he protested. "We couldn't get away with it—and it wouldn't do us any good if we did. You know it wouldn't. Neither one of us is crooks. We were raised wrong. We've got a chance to square ourselves and make a little stake besides, if we see this thing through as we started. Isn't that enough?"

"Yes, it is," Whidby admitted falteringly. "But are we going to be able to do it?"

"Yes, we are," Spike gritted. "If we get law to back our play. You'll have to beat it back and connect with Barney Lisk—or one of these constables. Get him here before these fellows make the second raid—because they'll come to clean up when they come again. Sabe? No use for you to come back without somebody, because you can't do anything that I can't do. You might just as well start now, while your engine's still warm."

"Ah, rats!' Whidby expostulated. "I'm going to eat first, gold or no gold."

So they went up to the camp and cooked a hasty meal. Whidby talked more or less freely, switching from his same justification of taking possession of that gold to Smily Brooks' sayings and doings in Port Essington.

"I talked to him a while about this new strike," Bob eventually declared. "In fact, he saw Helen at the store getting some stuff, and, recognizing her as the girl his car knocked down in Vancouver last winter, he came out to the shack while I was there. He doesn't seem such a bad sort."

If Whidby had been looking at his partner, he might have noticed the red that flared swiftly into Clancy's face. But Spike turned his head away to conceal it, and passed up the information with a mere grunt. Inwardly, he was raging to think of that beefy, dissolute crook associating with Helen Whidby. And a part of that anger was directed against her brother. But Spike was conscious that in more than one way he had to cope with a ticklish situation. So he kept his feelings to himself till Whidby satisfied his appetite, shoved off the *Shadow*, and went thrumming downstream.

"It beats the band how the itch for a big chunk of easy money burns into a man with pretty decent notions of what's right and wrong," Spike soliloquized. "And that Brooks——"

He spat contemptuously, and involuntarily the right hand of him drew into a clenched fist.

Spike sat down on a log, rested his elbows on his knees, his chin between his palms, and fell into a deep study, his eyes fixed absently on the river. For

a long time he sat thus. A little red squirrel climbed up on the log, sat saucily up on his tail, and surveyed with open curiosity this two-legged invader of the solitudes. Then Clancy rose to his feet with a suddenness that sent the friendly squirrel clawing in a panic to the uppermost boughs of a near-by tree to chatter his indignation.

Clancy looked at his watch, and at the sky. The hands indicated half past three—and the sun rode high. He went up to the tent, picked up the bundle of sturgeon hooks, and set to work fashioning them into a cluster, with points projecting in a circle. Three sets of these he arranged, one below the other, on a short piece of heavy rope, lashing them fast with stout cord. In the end he had a rude but serviceable grapple that when dragged over the bottom would hook fast into anything in the way of wood or canvas. He had dragged shallow water for drowned men once or twice with just such a rig.

Then he made an anchor for the dugout by the simple expedient of tying a heavy rock to the painter end. With a forty-foot length of small cotton rope to trail his drag, his preparations were complete. He pushed off the canoe.

All the rest of that afternoon, Clancy worked back and forth on the river. He had the spot where the *Klickitat* anchored pretty well in mind, and he confined his activities strictly to this area. The water ran fairly clear. Nevertheless, he could see nothing—and he hooked nothing.

"Ah, darn it; I guess I'll quit," he growled at last, casting an eye upon the sun, which now rested its lower edge on a wooded sky line. "I'll go at it in the mornin' again. Blame these mosquitoes!"

He turned the nose of the canoe shoreward. Almost in the same instant his trailing line came taut. It failed to make Clancy's heart jump. He had snagged under innumerable rocks already. He pulled carefully on the line. It held, and the dugout came directly over the spot where it was fast. Clancy pulled a little harder. When he slacked line, the weight dragged it back. He lifted again carefully to the limit of what his hook lashings would bear, and when he let the line slip through his hands, the weight was still there. Clancy's eyes widened a trifle. It was no rock. And water-logged timber does not lie in the Skeena, save in deep, still backwaters. Clancy heaved over his stone anchor, stood up, and peeled off his clothes.

He stared for a minute or so, leaning over the bow of the dugout. The Skeena at no time ran with the limpid clearness of smaller mountain streams. But it was at its clearest stage, and when he looked hard he could see a blur below that he knew was bottom. He knew from study of river charts that the depth over quite a stretch thereabouts averaged nine feet, and the length of his anchor rope confirmed the chart figures.

He straightened up, drew a long breath, and plunged headfirst. A full forty seconds he remained below, a white shape clawing at the bottom. Then he shot up beside the canoe, and clung, panting, to the gunwale. After a bit, he clambered aboard, slapping at the mosquitoes which assailed his bare, glistening body. While he got his breath, he busied himself with sundry preparations. He took in all possible slack from his drag line, and cut it off, a length of twenty-odd feet. One end of this he made fast to a cross piece in the fore end of the dugout. The free end he took in his hand. Then he stood erect once more, filled his lungs with air, and plunged headlong.

This time he came up in less than half a minute, drew himself carefully aboard the dugout, laid hold of the line he had carried down, and began to haul.

CHAPTER XII.

A BIT OF A SLIP.

Clancy, drowsing at his lookout post the next afternoon, with his head wrapped in mosquito netting, heard and saw the *Shadow* from afar, and, to his disappointment, the telescope apprised him that Whidby was returning a second time alone. He had hoped for immediate reënforcements. But, lacking a limb of the law to help cope with the Brooks crowd, Clancy went down to meet his partner with a fairly cheerful countenance.

"Well, what luck this time?" he asked. "Did you make connections?"

Whidby nodded.

"Yes. Lisk and the other constable were both back," said he. "But they wouldn't come along with me. After considering the thing—seeing that the whole bunch is still laying in Port Essington—Lisk decided that he'd better make a quiet sneak of it, and come up here in another launch to-night or to-morrow night."

"I guess that'll do," Clancy remarked. "Just so he gets here. What did they think of your yarn? Surprise 'em?"

"I should say it did," Bob grinned. "They were willing enough to credit Brooks being at the bottom of it, but they were rather skeptical about the method. Lisk doesn't think anybody would be crazy enough to chuck a ton of gold into the Skeena and take chances on finding it again. However, he's willing to be shown."

"He'll be shown, all right," Clancy observed dryly. "If he'll get up here and have a little patience."

They hid the *Shadow* in its branchy retreat, and went up to the tent. The discontented, irascible mood had left Whidby, for some reason. He was almost jovial, more than usually talkative, full of cheerful speculation as to the outcome of their undertaking once they were reënforced by the constables.

"Of course, it makes our share of that fifty thousand shrink considerably," said he. "Because these two fellows will have to have their whack out of the reward. That was the first thing they thought about. They don't overlook any side money, these provincial police, I notice."

"I suppose a few thousand dollars looks as good to them as to anybody," Clancy replied. "I haven't any objection to the Skookumchuck Placers paying me good and plenty for restoring their property. I never fancied hunting men for blood money, though, and I might feel different about this if I hadn't been handed such a package of trouble over it myself. Your mining company pays in cash for that, and Smily Brooks, he pays whatever penalty the law hands him. If a man is going to play highwayman, he has no business getting innocent people into trouble. I'm playing to square myself. The reward's a side issue—mighty useful and welcome, if I get it; but a side issue, just the same. I'd lay for these fellows, anyway, reward or no reward."

Whidby nodded acquiescence.

"I guess that's about right," he agreed—but without heartiness.

The afternoon drew to a close. They ate their evening meal, and afterward had recourse to their pipes, finding a double gratification in tobacco, since it served to keep the persistent mosquitoes at a distance. Dusk fell. With it, wispy wraiths of fog began to steal up the river, blown in from the sea by a westerly breeze. The two betook themselves to their night post near the river's edge, Clancy to watch, Bob rolled in his blankets. They could see little, but the fog-thickened air magnified sound, created a marvelous resonant quality in the atmosphere. The few stirrings of night life in the forest behind them, in the thickets surrounding, the too-*whoo*, too-*whoo* of the horned owl, the sibilant rustling of the bush-tailed rats, the oc-

casional cry of some nocturnal water fowl, carried with extraordinary distinctness.

Two hours slipped by. Then a sound drifted up the river to Clancy's wide-open ears; at first faint and scarcely distinguishable, it slowly increased in volume until he identified it positively as the exhaust of a gasoline engine.

Whidby heard it, too; he rose on his elbow. They leaned expectantly, craning their necks, holding their breath till it exhaled forcibly in a sudden puff. The muffled beat drew nearer, came abreast—as well as they could judge. Then it ceased. For a few minutes there was complete silence. Suddenly through the hushed night came the rattling clank of a chain, just as Clancy had heard it before, but louder.

"Bold as brass," Clancy muttered. "They don't care a cuss who hears them. I guess they mean to finish the job in spite of hell and high water. Gosh, if those constables were only here!"

"What had we better do?" Bob whispered tensely.

"Get out in the canoe and see what's comin' off," Clancy replied shortly. "I don't know as we can do anything. We might scare 'em off again—but I don't think they'll scare worth a cent. Oh, if you'd just brought Lisk along!"

"All right," Whidby murmured. "Let's get out there."

"Have your gun in workin' order," Clancy admonished. "They'll shoot first and talk after, if anything starts. I wish I had a cannon. I'd sink 'em where they lie, the blasted pirates!"

Warily they launched the dugout and stole out on the shrouded river. Clancy, in his time-killing hours, had fashioned a second paddle. This he gave to Whidby with whispered instructions to steer the canoe port or starboard as he motioned. He, himself, knelt amidships. Under the quiet thrust of his blade, they slipped silently through the tenuous mist, and presently, like a rock off shore, the dim hulk of the *Klickitat* took form before them. There was neither sound nor light, only that barely perceptible shape lying motionless in the stream. Spike halted the canoe. For several minutes he squatted, listening. If there was any stir on the *Klickitat,* it was wonderfully stealthy.

Clancy's limbs were cramping, and, partly to ease them, partly to see better, he raised himself almost erect. A low "Hist!" from Whidby startled him, and, as he turned his head quickly, the dugout seemed to roll from under his feet.

Afterward, Clancy was always a trifle uncertain as to what actually happened. Of his own knowledge, he could never say. He had a momentary glimpse of a dinghy manned by two rowers, as he fell. He saw this other craft apparently coming straight at them, and he was falling, and then the whole thing was blotted out by a blinding burst of pain in his head. He remembered that distinctly.

When he consciously picked up the strands of thought again, he was strangling. Water pressed upon him, filled his ears, eyes, his mouth. He swallowed a huge quantity in an involuntary gasp for breath. Then his arms thrashed wildly for a second, and his head rose above the surface. Half choked as he was, with a rending pain through his temples, he sensed that he must float if he would live. He ceased his panicky struggle, lay still, submerged—all save his mouth and nostrils. The momentary rest aided him to think more clearly. He paddled with slow movements of his hands, until the first bewilderment gave way to an acute understanding of his predicament. He was being borne downstream by the current, and all about him the night haze shut thick, infolding cruiser, dugout, and shore alike. He knew, to be sure, on which side of him lay the north shore, but he had no idea how far he had been carried downstream. He was

well aware that a flaccid, unconscious body will float a long time on the surface, and he had no idea how long he had been in the water before he began to struggle and sink.

He began to swim toward shore, taking deliberate strokes to husband his strength, puzzling over how he had come in the river. Had that momentarily seen craft rammed them? Had he been struck down? Uppermost in his mind stirred an anxious wonder as to how Whidby had fared, if he, too, had been plunged in the Skeena to sink or swim.

Presently, swimming and floating by turns, with a scant reserve of strength for any effort, with warm, sticky streaks oozing continually down over his face, Clancy drew in to a somber shore line, and hauled himself out of a slow eddy over a great pile of driftwood.

And, with his feet on solid ground once more, he grew weak and sick, and was compelled to lie down on the reedy shore. The blood trickled steadily from a cut on his head that he fingered gingerly. His head ached and spun like a top, by turns. He was about all in, so he murmured to himself. But even so, after a time, Clancy, aware that by his mischance the marauders had secured a free field for their operations, still managed to lift his head, and, looking upstream, twist his features into a sardonic grin.

"I got the last and best shot in m' locker still," he whispered.

CHAPTER XII.

A RUN FOR THE MONEY.

When Clancy's natural vigor at length asserted its dominion over the temporary collapse of his body, he sat up and fashioned, from the cotton outer shirt he wore, a bandage to stay the flow of blood from his lacerated scalp. His head still throbbed, to be sure, but the stomach sickness and the tremulous weakness of his limbs were gone. With his head tied up, he rose and essayed to make his way along the shore. He was still armed, the revolver having stuck fast in his hip pocket.

"I'm still in the game," he grinned to himself.

But traveling along a brush-lined and heavily timbered bank soon proved a slow and disheartening task. A painful one, moreover, for he had left off his shoes when he embarked in the dugout. In the pitch black of the thickets, he could not see where he stepped, and his stockinged feet suffered woefully. No matter with what care he moved, he seemed inevitably to run foul of stones or fallen timber that bruised and cut. And when at last he blundered into a clump of devil's club—a stout-stemmed bush which grows to the level of a man's head, and is armed with a bristling array of poisonous inch-long thorns—he gave over the attempt. He was, in fact, compelled to halt, for it took him fully half an hour to rid himself of the stinging barbs of the devil's club.

He made a rude calculation. He had been in the stream at least fifteen minutes before landing. A four-mile current coursed uniformly along Sand-fly Bottoms. That would land him at least a mile below camp—besides which he had no idea how long he might have been floating downstream before consciousness returned. A mile barefooted through that intense darkness, through thickets infested with thorns and stones, and barred with huge fallen trees, was rather more of an undertaking than it at first appeared. There was little beach—the forest, with its flooring of heavy brush, laved its feet in the brink of the stream.

Clancy decided that he would gain time by waiting for dawn. It was midnight, or later, and day came early. So he wrung as much moisture as possible

out of his clothing, and curled himself up in a cluster of tall ferns. The night was comfortably warm. He busied himself warding off mosquitoes, wondering sadly the while if Bob Whidby had been less fortunate than he and gone to swell the Skeena's roll of dead.

He growled a profane expletive. He was not yet at the end of his resources. And, too, the long arm of the law was reaching out to aid—even now Barney Lisk and his fellows might be on the way. The law could not help Whidby if he had gone to his death out of the canoe, but it might serve to exact vengeance. Clancy was primitive enough in his loves and hates to feel a measure of satisfaction in that.

Dawn came at last, stealing soft-footed and pale up from behind the jagged crest of the Coast Range. As the crimson-and-yellow flush of sunrise spilled and spread across the mountains, a little breeze came down the gray river, banishing the night fog back to the sea.

Clancy welcomed it gladly. He was stiff, and sore, and cold, as well as hungry. And, peering eagerly forth as the light grew, he saw the slate-colored *Klickitat* riding at anchor off his camp, a mile or so above. A sooty wisp of smoke trailed from her galley stack. A figure or two moved about on deck.

"They think the coast's clear, so they don't give a darn for a little publicity," Spike growled in his throat. "I suppose they'll finish the job—if they haven't already. It does look like they had all the best of it. I expect, though," and he grinned mildly, "they'll stick around a while. The question is: How am I goin' to make a fast, safe get-away?"

What Clancy meant by a fast, safe get-away was to get down to Port Essington and galvanize those perfunctory constables into activity. How he should do it was a question he could not answer offhand, could not answer at all, in fact, until he got to close quarters and sized up the situation. Either dugout or launch he must have. To undertake walking down the Skeena was absurd. That was a week's journey for a man properly outfitted to hike, and in full possession of physical fitness. And Clancy was far from fit. All night the blood had seeped from that wound in his scalp. That and the shock of the blow had put him in a bad way. Only the superhuman may drive on regardless of such trifles. And Clancy, though a strong man, and young, was scarcely equal to such heroics. He would gladly have laid his weakened body and throbbing head on a comfortable couch and let the problems that assailed him go hang until such time as he was more fit to wrestle with them. But that being manifestly impossible, he did the next best thing and bore slowly up toward the camp—a figure of terrifying appearance, with a bloody shirt wrapped about his head, the red ooze from under it painting him with carmine streaks to his waist. He fared slowly through the hushed woods, a desperate earnestness upon his drawn face.

Presently he was abreast of where the *Shadow* lay secure beneath the overhanging boughs of alder. He was getting unaccountably weak; the exertion of walking made him tremble. He felt himself growing light-headed.

When he stopped to rest and to spy out the land, he saw one of the Brooks gang on the beach, and heard him call to another, who presently answered from the neighborhood of the tent. So he was shut off from his own camp, from food and fresh footgear—unless he chose to walk in with drawn revolver and declare war. Clancy thought of that, and dismissed it as futile. He was none too sure that he might not see double if it came to the strain of shooting. And five to one was rather long odds. No, he could only run for it. Meantime, he sat resting on a fallen

trunk, peering through the sheltering branches of the thicket, seeing, but unseen.

Gradually he marshaled certain facts. He was cut off from access to his camp, by reason of the men ashore. At any time they might go aboard and leave the coast clear. Again, one or more might stick to the land all day. And Clancy was loath to take a chance on waiting; for he judged by his growing feverish weakness that ten or twelve hours' irritation by flies, steady draining of blood, and lack of food, would leave him in no condition to do aught but stagger, like an exhausted beast, into the dubious limits of that camp. Plainly, then, he must get downriver, while he was able to make the effort.

On the beach, in plain sight, lay the *Klickitat's* dinghy and his dugout. But nowhere did he glimpse Bob Whidby, though at various times he identified the five members of the Brooks crew. In any case, his concern was not with his partner. He must run for it, and if they saw him, he must be able to show them a clean pair of heels. So his choice narrowed perforce to the *Shadow*. And luckily the *Shadow* was available.

Having thus summed up his conclusions, Clancy proceeded to act. He moved quietly down to the launch, crawled aboard, and went carefully over the motor; opened the gasoline feed valve, squirted a priming charge into each cylinder, revolved the flywheel to get the mixture vaporized, and left one piston hard up against compression so that she would shoot on the switch.

He cast off the mooring line. Then he laid hold of the boughs overhead, and gave the *Shadow* a start that drove the easily moved hull out of the still water of her mooring place into the grip of the current. As the last branch brushed his face, Spike dropped below the level of the coaming, with one hand at the switch, the other gripping the starter crank on the bulkhead. There was a chance that no one would notice the drifting boat. He was quite sure that any or all that company would act promptly on the principle that dead men tell no tales, and he hoped only to fool them briefly. A few yards' start would help a lot, every rod drifted meant added safety from their guns.

But he had scarcely got well started when he heard one shout:

"Hey! Look yonder!"

The note of surprise and alarm quickened Clancy. Also the current, he found, tended to swing the *Shadow* sidewise. He judged it to be now or never. If the engine picked up quickly, he would be out of range before they could hoist anchor. If it balked—but Clancy stopped thinking of possibilities, and threw the switch.

One lone staccato pop resulted. Then Spike rose from his concealment and twisted the crank in hot haste, once—twice—half a dozen times, before the motor fired with a rhythmic crackle. His throttle was already wide. He kicked in the clutch, and ran up his spark. Back at the stern, the *Shadow's* wheel set the water boiling. For a space of ten seconds, she shook like a palsied hand under the labor of her engine and the rank slip of her wheel. Then she gained way and struck her gait. Fine cascades of spray fell outward from her lifted bow, and from under her transom the smooth water streamed like a flat, green ribbon.

With that also some one on the *Klickitat* opened fire. The crack and the splatter where the bullet struck alongside stemmed in Clancy the exhilaration of spirit that rose with the swift rush of escape, of successful chance taking. He bethought himself to lessen the size of target he offered by dropping to his knees. Then he took his first backward look.

The two ashore were pulling like mad for the ship. Two hauled at the anchor. And from the *Klickitat's* side shot

steam and blue smoke, and the unmuffled roar of her exhaust cracked on the river like a rapid-fire gun. Even as he looked, the boatmen clambered aboard, dragging the light dinghy with them, and the cruiser swung in a short circle, and gathered way. The sharp popping of her exhaust rose to a sustained roar.

Clancy shook his fist at them. He had almost a half-mile start, and he did not believe any boat of the *Klickitat's* displacement could gain an inch on the *Shadow,* or even hold her own.

He felt called upon to qualify that belief in the next ten minutes, when he perceived that the *Klickitat* was designed and powered to move at a speed far beyond his calculations. He lost no ground—neither did he gain, not a foot after the cruiser got up speed. Behind him, that long, leaden-hued hull turned out a white-crested bow wave on either side, and the roar of her engine lifted to high heaven between the silent banks. It was a matter of endurance. If *his* engine laid down—for the mere matter of a minute—less, even! Clancy was fast growing too apathetic to speculate about the result. The exertion of cranking the motor had started a fresh stream of blood from his head. He felt his strength slipping away. To the bitter end he would go, whatever it might be, but he had no more enthusiasm for it, only a dogged determination. If they caught up, they would sink or shoot him—it mattered little which. If they failed to catch him, well and good. So long as the *Shadow's* motor purred like a contented cat—albeit, a trifle loudly—he could defy them.

In the first heat of the chase, perhaps six or seven shots were fired. After that, whenever Clancy looked back he could see three or four men roosting on the forward deck. He could grin at the way their mouths must water to get at him. If Whidby was accounted for—and the dugout on the bank would seem to indicate that—and if they could get him, Clancy, they could go back and finish the job at their ease. No one else knew. No one else had guessed. They could feel secure. With the two would-be detectives put away, they could attend to that ton of gold at their leisure. A humorous gleam crept into Clancy's bloodshot eyes. He seemed, even in his extremity, to find solace in some fanciful twist of the situation.

Then, as he neared the lower end of Sand-fly Bottoms, his engine began to miss. An odd stroke now and then, which neither alarmed him nor slowed him down—until suddenly it grew acute, choking almost to a stop, sputtering, picking up as he closed the throttle, missing and jerking when he opened up again. He lost way. Behind him the cruiser swept down, lean, piratical, unfaltering.

Clancy guessed the trouble to be some obstruction in his gasoline pipe. It had happened once before. He rapped the brass piping sharply with a wrench, and for a minute or so the motor sang at top speed. But it began to miss again, worse than ever, and repeated tapping with the wrench availed nothing. He was now fast losing his lead. Looking backward, he calculated swiftly his chances. Assuredly he had no time to go under the hatch, disconnect the feed pipe, and dislodge the obstruction. The *Klickitat* would be on top of him before he had the coupling unscrewed. He looked ahead. From the lower end of Sand-fly jutted a sizable point. Beyond that point the bank rose sheer. But on the near side, barely three hundred yards distant, lay a narrow strip of sandy shore line.

"I got one chance," he whispered. "Beach her and take to the woods."

As he threw the helm, putting the *Shadow's* nose shoreward at a limping travesty on her regular gait, the men on the cruiser began to shoot.

At first their shots went wild, strik-

ing ahead or yards aside with a nasty *plop*. But, as the *Klickitat* gained, he noticed improvement in their aim. A bullet ripped through the *Shadow's* planking. It pricked her below the water line on the port side. Clancy stared at the jet of water, as big as his little finger, that squirted in. Another glanced, with a metallic *plang*, off some part of the engine. One smacked the coaming beside him, and buried a hardwood splinter in his cheek.

"Me next, I guess," he muttered grimly, and drew his revolver.

He was growing sick again, with that peculiar, hot-stomached weakness of exhaustion. And he still lacked two hundred yards of the beach. The drumming roar of the cruiser's exhaust came louder. He raised his gun and fired. A burst of shots answered back.

Now it was a hundred yards—now fifty—and the bullets flying fast. Though the river thrust watery fingers into the *Shadow's* bilge through half a dozen holes, yet by some miracle Clancy escaped wound until, at length, as the *Shadow's* forefoot drove with a crunching thud into the gravelly shore, and her wheel thrashed the water sternward, something like the sting of an overgrown bee took Spike under one armpit and doubled him up on the floor.

He was afflicted with a deadly numbness in his limbs, and the irregular pounding of his engine shook the boat so that he fumbled sadly in the attempt, but he managed at last to twist himself about and fumblingly close the switch and stop the motor. Then he refilled the cylinder of his gun. His brain still worked, if his body was well-nigh helpless. It was coming to close quarters, and he meant to hurt somebody. With blood oozing from his head, and pouring in a warm stream over his body from a hole under his arm, and that paralyzing weakness upon him, the shelter of the woods was not for him. In so far as he could, he would fight.

Lying in the bottom of the boat, expecting the *Klickitat* to run in close and to be boarded by her men, Clancy listened. He hoped Smily Brooks would look first over the gunwale, for he meant to kill the first man who looked and as many more as he could before they put him out of his misery. And listening, he found, to his surprise, that though the roar of the *Klickitat's* exhaust still sounded plain enough, it did not seem so close. Also, though there seemed to be even an accelerated amount of shooting, no bullets struck the *Shadow*, nor plopped nastily in the water about her. And again, it seemed to him that another gasoline engine was *pr-r-r*-utting loudly in the immediate neighborhood.

Whereupon Clancy laid hold of the coaming and drew himself painfully up till he could see. With his sore-tried body resting against the rear-seat bulkhead, he held on to the boat's side in pain and growing weakness, and watched the gray-hulled pirate go to her end.

Out in the stream the *Klickitat* had turned tail, and now bore upriver. A black-bodied thirty-footer with a canopy top drove hot in pursuit. A persistent crackle of gun fire rose from both craft. The *Klickitat* had the measure of the newcomer for sped, but not greatly so, and from behind the low freeboard of the black launch, the rifles popped merrily, as if the pursuers meant to riddle the Brooks boat or annihilate her crew before they lost the range.

Clancy could easily guess how the tide of battle had ebbed and left him stranded in the face of imminent disaster. The black boat must have popped around the bend just as the *Klickitat* closed in to make an end of him. Why they had taken up the fight?—or it might be the provincial police.

"Sure, I expect that's it," Clancy muttered. "Bob said they were comin'. It must be them."

Half a mile beyond, the two boats bucked the swift current with throttles wide open and lead flying fast, the wicked crack of the rifles caught up and flung from bank to bank in multiple echoings, until it seemed as if an army were engaged. Clancy rested his chin on the coaming and watched in a detached, impersonal way, as if he were a mere disinterested spectator, He was sinking fast. Things were getting out of focus. His keenest emotion was a mild curiosity as to the outcome—whether the *Klickitat* would get away. He wondered if anybody had as yet gotten so sore a hurt as his.

Then, while the two boats were still within clear view of his blurring vision, a sooty burst flung suddenly upward from amidships of the *Klickitat*. In that instant the sharp bark of her exhaust was stilled. Abruptly she fell off, swung sidewise, and the black launch seemed to fairly leap toward her. Through the murky smoke pillar ran little red tongues of flame. In a trice these lifted high in the air, and Clancy saw two figures dive headlong off her deck. These the black boat picked up. The popping of rifles had ceased. From the *Klickitat's* middle section flame and smoke reached forty feet in the air, yet the black launch drew in across her bows, and Clancy saw one make fast a line and clamber aboard with a bucket.

All this took time, and all the while the powerful current swept burning cruiser and her black consort swiftly downstream. When the launch straightened away, Clancy saw that she was headed for the beach with the *Klickitat* in tow, and his knowledge of the river told him that in all likelihood the burning launch would strand within a hundred yards of where he lay.

Which is precisely what occurred. Straight in the black launch drove with her blazing tow at the end of a singeing line. And when the *Klickitat* grounded in three feet of water the line parted with a snap. She was burning now with a spiteful crackle that Clancy could hear—all the after part of her wrapped in flame.

And the officers—for as such he now recognized them, seeing the familiar lineaments of Barney Lisk among those present—drove their two prisoners out to the cruiser and fell to work heaving up buckets of water, standing, prisoners and police alike, up to their thighs in the stream.

For an endless period of time, it seemed to Clancy, they baled and splashed with little result save white puffs of steam when water met flame. And, as he watched, a great weariness fell upon Clancy. He no longer suffered with that fierce, stinging pain under his armpit, nor the soreness of his bandaged head. But he was tired of watching that futile struggle with an elemental force, he was tired of everything. What did it all amount to, anyway? He moved a little, and perceived, dully, that he sat in a spreading pool of blood. And while this unwelcome fact filtered slowly into his consciousness he crumpled sidewise. The slight jarring knock his head received, as he slid to the cockpit floor, extinguished everything.

CHAPTER XIV.

SOME EXPLANATIONS.

When, for the second time in twenty-four hours, Spike Clancy opened his eyes with that curious bewilderment which sometimes follows an involuntary lapse of consciousness, he found himself stretched on his own blankets in his own tent, with a large, sandy-mustached man diligently whisking flies away from him with a newspaper. This was altogether unseemly, according to Clancy's notion. There was a hot dryness in his mouth, and his head throbbed fearfully, but he resented the fact of an able-bodied man performing such of-

fices for him. Clancy essayed to rise, and was thereby reminded of certain things—the quick movement sent a racking pang through his chest, eliciting a mingled grunt and oath.

"Comin' alive, huh?" the big-bodied person voiced the obvious, after the manner of commonplace folk who must have a remark for every occasion. "How'd yuh feel?"

"Rotten!" Clancy made brief reply. "What all happened?"

"Heaps," the other grinned. "High old times on the Skeena this day, believe me! Too bad yuh missed seein' the scrap. There's only three of us in *Black Bess*. But we're there with bells on, you bet. We put three of these here fellers t' the bad, an' capture two specimens. I'm the only one of us that gets nicked. Mild nick, too."

He exhibited a bandaged leg.

"I can walk on it," he asserted loftily. "So 'tain't so bad."

"Where's Lisk?" Clancy inquired. "And, say—has my partner, Bob Whidby, turned up?"

"I ain't seen no such party," his caretaker answered. "Lisk, he's out on the river, a-tryin' to raise that there gold."

"Oh!" Clancy puckered his brows. "I see."

But he did not quite see. He was wondering how—— Then he remembered. Whidby had told Lisk, of course. Anyway, a more important matter engaged his attention. He was thirsty and hungry, ravenously so.

"I wish you'd give me a drink of water," said he.

"You bet!" He of the flowing red mustache supplied this want at once, by the simple expedient of reaching to a bucket behind him.

"What time of day is it?" Clancy desired to know, then.

The fellow consulted his watch: "Three-thirty!"

"Great Scott!" Clancy murmured. "No wonder I'm hungry. Say, I ain't had nothing to eat since yesterday. What's the chance for somethin' in the grub line? I'm ready to eat a boot."

"I got your order," the large man said agreeably. "Comin' up. There's the finest mulligan you ever looked at stewin' over the fire out here."

He hobbled out, and presently returned with a plate of this mulligan—which is a soupy stew, with every sort of meat and vegetable for ingredient that can be secured in a camp: beans, potatoes, carrots, corn, bacon, a bit of rabbit, the breast of a grouse, all boiled helter-skelter. Clancy ate, and felt new life flow through him. And while he solaced himself with tobacco, after this acceptable nourishment, Barney Lisk came in.

"Hello, Spike!" he greeted. "Able to sit up and feed yourself, eh? That's good. Say, Dave, you limp down and help Lawrence keep an eye on them two crooks."

Barney sat down, pushed his hat back, and rolled himself a cigarette.

"Some mix-up, eh?" he ventured at last. "We came pretty near being too late to do you any good."

Clancy grunted something unintelligible.

"I looked you over as soon as we had time to 'tend to you," Lisk continued. "That hole under your arm's just in the flesh. You bled an awful lot, though. I'd 'a' rushed you down to a doctor, but you're a pretty husky cuss, and I thought you'd be all right. Wanted to finish this job up clean while I was at it."

"Sure! I'll be all right. I'm weak as a cat, and sore. That's all," Clancy affirmed. "You didn't run across Whidby yet, eh?"

"Well, I don't hardly expect to," Lisk answered slowly. "I wouldn't know him—if I saw him—but I don't hardly expect to see him. Not if he sees me first."

Clancy lifted his bandaged head to glare at the constable.

"What the devil are you talking about?" he demanded irritably.

Lisk blew a mouthful of smoke, and watched it eddy out the tent door.

"I guess you got the double cross from this partner of yours, Spike," he said at last. "I can't figure it out any other way."

Clancy digested this in silence.

"I don't see how," he said finally. "Bob went down after you. You were supposed to get up here last night. You didn't happen to come soon enough, that's all. When these fellows came in and started work, we went out in the dugout to see what we could do. The canoe got upset, and I knocked my head as I went over. It put me out of business, and I floated downstream a ways. When I got out of the water I have to wait for daylight before I can get to the launch and make a run for it. I got out by a scratch—and for all I know Bob may be drowned or these fellows may have got away with him. They were right on top of us—two of 'em in a boat—when it happened. So I don't see where Whidby double-crossed *me*."

"I do," Lisk returned. "Here's the way of it: Whidby never yeeped a word to me. He come down to Port Essington to make medicine with Smily Brooks."

Lisk paused. Clancy stared at the roof of the tent. He could not escape the inference of Lisk's flat-footed statement. It made that blow on the head clear—but it also made him wince. He hated to think that of Bob Whidby.

"'S a matter uh fact," Lisk went on, "I didn't know exactly what I was goin' to run into when I come up here. Nobody had an idea what was on tap about this stolen gold. I always had a hunch it was a fake shipment. I didn't really believe there was any ton of gold ever loaded on the *Bubble*."

"How'd you catch on then, if Whidby didn't tell you?" Clancy demanded. "What put you wise?"

"Whidby's sister," Lisk answered quietly. "Yesterday she come to me all worked up, and tells me this amazin' yarn about you and her brother dopin' this thing out in Vancouver last winter, comin' up here, and findin' your dope fairly correct. That made me sit up. Then she got out what was really worryin' her: She'd overheard Whidby and Brooks talkin'. Not much, but enough to give a quick-witted woman somethin' to go on. They're framin' it up that Whidby shall go back, and, when Brooks blows in with the cruiser, Whidby's to sidetrack you some way. He's to get a whack out of the plunder."

Lisk stopped to relight his cigarette.

"Go on, go on!" Clancy muttered.

"Well, the girl's scared to death for fear you'll get killed off in the sidetrackin'," the constable smiled. "She said you weren't an easy man to sidetrack, and that ten to one they'd have to hurt you. She wanted me to head off this brother of hers before he got in too deep, but she was mostly concerned about you."

He regarded Clancy with a cheerful grin, and Spike stared up at the canvas.

"So I got Bix and Lawrence, and hit 'er up," Lisk continued his narrative. "Didn't get started till away after night, because I had to wait till this forest-service boat came in. There wasn't a launch in Essington could do more than a crawl up the river, and I knew this *Klickitat* could travel. Consequently we happened along just in time to run plump into things. You were just hitting the beach, and this Brooks crowd was smokin' you to a queen's taste. To tell you the truth, I was a mite surprised. I did think, for a fact, that the girl had exaggerated things. But they cut loose on us right off the reel. It was some scrap, I tell you!"

"I know," Clancy interrupted. "I

saw it—up to the time you beached the *Klickitat,* and started to fight fire."

"Oh, did you?" Lisk observed. "Well, we got off pretty lucky. Started her gasoline supply burnin'. Bumped off Brooks and Mike Sellers. The big Swede he cashed in right after we landed. He was burned awful. And these two fellers that's left they've got the fear of God in 'em so bad they've told me everything they know. That's how I've got it all straight. Whidby was to bat you over the head in such a way you wouldn't know how it happened, as soon as these other fellows showed up in the dink. Then they'd take you ashore and tie you up. When the gold had all been lifted and Whidby'd got his share, the Brooks bunch was to pull out, and he was to go and rescue you—the play bein' that he'd been up against it himself. The gold would be gone, see, and you couldn't do anything but call it a bad job, and keep your mouth shut. Sabe? But when he spilled you out of the dugout, which he didn't aim to do, he got in a regular funk, and went all to pieces. He was delayin' the game—so Smily tied him up to a tree to think it over, and went at his business."

"What became of Bob, then?" Clancy demanded. "What are you goin' to do about it?"

"Wright says your dugout was on the beach, and Whidby still tied to the tree when they started out to run you down," Lisk replied. "When *we* rolled in here, Whidby was gone, and the dugout, too. Figure it out for yourself. He could easy keep out of sight along the bank when we passed. And I don't know's I'll do anything about it. He tried to pull off a mighty poor stunt, and he simply got it handed to him. Probably do him good. He didn't set out to hurt you—all he wanted was a fat whack out of that half million. Now he's half batty thinkin' he killed you. Let him sweat a while. I ain't lookin' for him. Nobody knows about it but you, and me, and the girl. He wanted a bunch of easy money, and all he got was a package of trouble. That's good enough."

With which, Mr. Lisk bestowed upon Clancy a slow lowering of his right eyelid, as one who would say, "what's a little thing like that between friends?" Clancy remained silent.

"I'm up against a hard proposition, though, just the same," Lisk continued perplexedly. "We got these fellows dead to rights—what's left of 'em. They've come through with everything they know. We can send 'em over for robbery and attempted murder. But—there ain't no gold where they said there was!"

"No?" said Clancy.

"None that amounts to a pinch of snuff," Lisk declared. "We beat the fire out on that boat uh theirs, partly because there was two dead men on it, but mostly because I thought maybe they'd got the stuff aboard. There was a little—maybe ten or twelve thousand dollars' worth. But that ain't no ton. Then we come on up here, and these two fellers locate the spot where the rest is. But Lawrence has been walking the bottom in their divin' suit—which was up in the *Klickitat's* bow, and didn't get scorched—and all he's found is four of them little sacks tied up in a big one. They claim it was all dumped in one spot. And they claim they didn't get it. Kinda stumps me. I figured to collect Mr. Whidby's share uh that reward. I could use the money fine."

"A ton of gold wouldn't get up and walk off by itself, would it?" Clancy remarked.

"Not what you could notice," Lisk grumbled.

"I wonder why they didn't go through with it that first time, when they took a crack at me and then pulled out?" he mused.

"You punched a hole in their divin'

dress, and they had to lay off till they got it patched," Lisk supplied. "Wright told me."

He rolled another cigarette, and Clancy stared at him thoughtfully.

"Lift up that side wall, will you, Barney?" said he, when that gentleman had applied a light to his cigarette and let the match burn to a charred stub between his fingers.

Lisk laid hold of the canvas and held it up. Clancy twisted painfully on his bed and pointed over the branchy thickets.

"See that dead cedar with the top broken off?" he asked.

"I see it," Lisk affirmed.

"The stump's hollow," said Clancy. "Go and look in there."

Lisk dropped the canvas, and looked hard at Clancy. "What's the idea?" he inquired, a note of expectancy in his voice.

"Go and see," Clancy muttered briefly, and turned his gaze once more on the gray canvas roof. And Lisk, with a last puzzled glance at him, rose and went out.

Five minutes later, Clancy heard him whoop exultantly, and, after another lapse of time, he heard footsteps approaching. Looking out between the tied-back flaps, he saw the two members of the gold-stealing gang staggering beachward under a heavy burden. Lisk and Constable Lawrence also bore upon their capable shoulders more of the same. Bix limped in the rear, carrying a rifle. Presently he heard them crackling through the brush again. When the noise of their several trips died away, Lisk came back to the tent.

"Shake, if you ain't too sore across the shoulders," he greeted triumphantly. "How did you do it?"

"I got leary when Bob went down after you that second time," Clancy equivocated. "I was afraid they might beat you to it—and I wouldn't be able to stop 'em. So I located it with a drag, while I was here alone."

"Yes—but how did you get it up?" Lisk puzzled. "That's what gets me. Gold's heavy."

"I'm pretty good in the water," Clancy declared simply. "I dived for it. I'd tie a rope to what I could lift, get back up to the canoe, and haul it up. I left that one batch—to have something on Brooks if he came and got it."

"Dived for it!" Lisk repeated, in amazement. "By gosh! you're a wonder, Spike."

Clancy brooded for a minute. Then said he:

"You won't bother Whidby?"

"Not unless you want to, for that crack on the head," Lisk responded promptly. "He didn't get away with anything. *Only,* he better keep out of the country, or he'll be called on for a witness when these chaps come up for trial. Then he might have to tell on himself."

"I guess he'll keep away, all right," Clancy said.

"I shouldn't wonder," Lisk agreed.

"The boys are cookin' some grub down at the river," the constable remarked, after a little. "When we've eat, we'll load you aboard, and get down to Essington. We've beat a hard game, d'yuh know it, Clancy? A ton uh gold! It makes a man study. I dunno's I blame Whidby. I been thinkin' how easy—and how blamed fine it would be to get away with a sack or two of the darned stuff myself!"

Clancy nodded. Lisk filled a pipe for him. They smoked silently. And as they smoked, there came drifting in through the tall cedars a low, rhythmic pulsation that smote familiarly on Clancy's hearing—the throb of a stern-wheel steamer. Lisk rose and looked out.

"Going upstream, by the sound," said he. "I guess that's the *Rosebud.* She's about due."

He sat down again. The regular *chuff, chuff* gained in volume. When the sound was abreast of them, according to Clancy's judgment, the beat of the exhaust died to a whisper.

"Well," said Lisk. "Sounds like she's stoppin', don't it? I guess I'll go see."

His footfalls died quickly in the mossy floor of the grove. Away in the distance, Clancy heard a solitary voice calling, ship's officer, he surmised, shouting through a megaphone. Some message for Lisk, probably. Clancy paid little attention. It was not a matter which concerned him, and there were matters which did concern him turning over ceaselessly in his aching brain. So far as the robbery of the *Bubble* and the ton of gold went, he could safely write finis to that chapter —since the mystery was no longer a mystery, and the gold in a fair way to reach its lawful owners. He would come out of that mess with credit, and a measure of pay for his pains.

But even that prospect brought scant consolation. It grieved and angered Clancy far more than he cared to admit, when he dwelt upon Whidby's blunder—to characterize its mildest aspect. Not because Bob had leagued himself with crooks to achieve wealth by crooked means. Spike could understand the temptation, and he did not underrate it. Nor did he harbor more than a passing resentment for that treacherous blow with the paddle. That was merely an incidental phase of the other. But he did resent the position Whidby had put himself in. It meant that he must go stealthily out of the country, and go at once. And likely as not Helen would go with him. She would cleave to her own blood in misfortune. That was Clancy's grievous fear. He must lie helpless on his back, and let something he valued above all else slip out of his life.

It would hurt her, of course. He winced in sympathy with her hurt pride. But he could not say to himself with surety she will do this, or act so. His impulse was all to go to her and assure her that everything was all right; that Bob's slip was simply a foolish mistake; that no harm was done. And before he got the chance, Whidby might have reached her with his conscience-stricken tale of disaster. Then they would be gone. Flight would be imperative for Whidby. Still, Clancy did not believe Helen would go without knowing whether he was alive or dead. He liked to think she cared that much.

Once more his train of thought was interrupted by the hoarse puffing of the stern-wheeler getting under way. He lay and listened, reflecting on the unexpected tangents along which a man's life may be directed. If Smily Brooks had not planned a colossal theft, he, Spike Clancy, might be at the wheel of that very craft, bucking up the Skeena, quite unconscious of the existence of such a woman as Helen Whidby, unharassed by any ethical problem, burdened with no mental gropings nor physical suffering such as now assailed him.

"But that's silly, too," Clancy whispered, recalling a discussion with Whidby along that very line of thought. "I got to go on blunderin' into things, gettin' pain or pleasure out of it, as long as I live. We all do. If a fellow didn't go on, and things didn't happen, he'd petrify mind and body. But I wish I could 'a' dodged *this.*"

He shifted slightly to a more comfortable position, drew a width of mosquito netting over his face to keep off the annoying flies. Then he closed his eyes and tried to stop thinking.

Presently he became aware of voices approaching the tent. Lisk was talking, but as Clancy took mechanical cognizance of the constable's deep tone, another voice broke in, and Spike's head came up with a jerk to strained attention. For he had heard a woman speak

in a voice belonging to one particular woman. And Clancy's heart almost stood still as he listened.

He could not see them, by reason of the angle from which they approached, not until they reached the door. Then Lisk stood framed in the canvas opening, behind him the drape of a gray skirt that Clancy knew.

"Hello, Spike! Awake?"

This was an entirely superfluous question, since Clancy's head was lifted, and he was staring in wide-eyed expectation.

"Brought you a visitor," Lisk grinned amiably. "Step in, miss. He looks a little the worse for wear, but he's not so bad off as he looks."

Which was substantially correct, since the rude and bloody wrapping about his head, and the profusely stained shirt of him gave an exaggerated impression of his injury.

"Come right in."

Lisk drew back as he spoke. As Helen entered the tent and moved, with a trace of nervous shyness, to Clancy's bedside, they heard the constable making ostentatious retreat toward his fellows on the beach.

Clancy did not speak—he looked up, smiling. And neither did the girl. She stood, tugging at her gloves.

"How are you?" she proffered an unemotional commonplace, and, having removed her gloves, extended a hand.

"Not so bad," Spike answered—as his fingers closed weakly upon hers.

It was not at all as he had pictured their meeting. He was dumb; all but his eyes. And she kept staring at him in a queer, strained fashion totally unlike her cool, collected, normal self. He saw her teeth catch at her under lip when her gaze rested on his bloodily bandaged head.

And then, before either was quite aware of any particular breaking point in that odd tensity, she dropped to her knees and gathered his wounded head and broad shoulders up in her strong young arms with a half-articulate little cry.

"Oh, my poor boy! My poor, dear boy!" she whispered.

Clancy felt something warm and moist drop on his cheek.

"That's all right, lady girl," he whispered back. "That's all right. Everything's all right, now."

A GLORIFICATION OF FUTILITY

WHEN General Ben Butler was practicing law in the courts of the District of Columbia, he was famous for the striking ideas he evolved and the effective methods he employed in order to get the interests of his clients before the jury in a favorable light.

In one case in which he had a rather poor show of winning, the time came for him to cross-examine a fellow lawyer who had given testimony extremely favorable to the other side. Everybody listened intently for Butler's onslaught. It was expected that he would go after the witness with gloves off.

"Gentlemen of the jury," he said, with an air of confiding familiarity, "I would as soon think of shooting skyrockets into the infernal regions for purposes of illumination as to cross-examine this witness in the hope of extracting the truth."

"Pepper"

By Holworthy Hall

A story of Harvard life, clever, distinctive, original, and whimsical. The first of a number of stories that we hope to publish about "Pepper" McHenry, an undergraduate who here makes his debut in a whirlwind campaign to make a businessman of a classmate and add a worth-while recruit to the baseball squad.

NINE o'clock in the evening, in Cambridge, is too early to stop doing nothing, and too late to undertake anything really important, so that James Pepper McHenry, having the lust for human companionship in his heart, and no money in his pocket, pulled a tweed cap over his eyes, and sallied forth in search of the unknown. His first impulse was to turn up the avenue to Leavitt's for a game of billiards, but it occurred to him that he already owed Leavitt thirty-nine dollars, wherefore he relinquished the project with a sigh of heartfelt economy.

His sophomore club was only a block away, but it was a club notoriously cold in the wintertime, and, furthermore, he was posted, to the best of his knowledge and belief, for the amount of forty-seven dollars and forty-seven cents, and the treasurer of the club was a man as tactless as he was sincere.

To McHenry, standing on the corner of Mount Auburn and Linden Streets, the thought of the *Crimson* sanctum shone through the mist of his uncertainty like a beacon on a stormy night; and, without waiting for further inspiration, he set his course for the Union, in the basement of which democratic edifice the college daily has its quarters.

The bare, square outer office was, as usual, quiet and disordered. Under a green-shaded light, two nervous candidates were collaborating on a ten-line rehash of an item concerning the landscape gardening at the Medical School, while a tall, dark young man, scribe for a metropolitan newspaper, sparred vigorously at the keys of a rheumatic typewriter. With innate curiosity, McHenry peered over his shoulder, and read the sober but alarming statement that there were at present sixteen Chinese students at the university, and fifteen of them were sons of mandarins of the third rank.

"Good Lord!" he exclaimed involuntarily. "Can't you bag any better news than *that?*"

The two candidates started at the familiar indictment, but returned to their rehash with all the authentic symptoms of nervous prostration as soon as they discovered that McHenry wasn't a senior editor looking for trouble. The young man engaged in tabulating statistics of the yellow peril looked up, and grinned very slowly.

"No, I can't," he said. "It's pretty feeble stuff, isn't it?"

"It's fearful drivel," commented McHenry briefly. "Why don't you get some good, live news—have an interview with somebody really important,

or dope out another all-American football team, or something vital along those lines? Why don't you?"

The scribe grinned even more slowly, and pulled the copy paper out of the battered machine.

"Keep away from that wheelbarrow," he quoted. "What do you know about machinery? Why, the answer is that I don't dare to fake anything. You see, I'm unfortunately tied up with a sheet that wants real news."

"I must have missed it," said McHenry, passing into the sanctum, where a solemn-faced junior lifted his head from a conscientious editorial bearing upon the behavior of freshmen in lecture rooms, and glowered at him.

"Oh—hello, Pep!" said the junior, allowing the corners of his mouth to relax. "I didn't recognize you. What's on your mind?"

"Only my cap," admitted McHenry, removing it thoughtfully. "Look here, Wilcox; who's the animated hatpin covering the Chinese situation out in your front parlor?"

"Chinese situation?" repeated Wilcox, in grave doubt.

"Yes. Good-looking chap with lots of legs under him."

"Oh, that's Phil Smith. He's scribe for a couple of New York newspapers. What's the matter with him?"

"You ought not to let those insects clutter up your factory," reproved McHenry, finding a chair, and taking possession of it. "He gives me the willies. If I ever saw a man with a free-lunch expression on his face, he's it!"

"To tell the truth," said Wilcox, lowering his voice, "I imagine he's in a pretty bad way, Pep. He's working his way through, and trying to take high rank at the same time. And he's scribing, and tutoring, and working for second assistant business manager of this publication, too. You remember him, don't you? You ought to—he's in your class. He's that Colorado lad who's supposed to be such a wizard of a baseball man. Don't you recollect the row about him last year?"

"Baseball!" said McHenry, sitting upright.

"Yes. He's the man who couldn't afford to play baseball."

"He—he couldn't *afford*—why, darn him, he's *got* to play! The idea of a man cutting out sports because he's too poor to spend the time—he's *got* to play!"

"Well, he can't."

"Why can't he?"

"Because it's all he can do to keep up with his class now. He's doing some clerical work over at Brooks House—I forgot to put that in. Of course, if he got this second assistant's job, he'd have an easier time of it, but——"

"For Pete's sake," said McHenry, "where would he get time to work for this bloody sheet?"

"As a matter of fact, he doesn't."

"Is he any good—I mean in baseball?"

"All I know is that he played one Saturday afternoon last spring in the scrub series, and made two two-baggers and two three-baggers, and about 'steen million coaches sat around his bedside until three g. m. trying to persuade him to starve to death for the sake of the team—that's all I know, Pep."

"Merciful St. Patrick! When did this managership competition start?"

"First of the year, but it doesn't end until February."

"Simply getting ads?"

"That's practically all it is."

"And the rake-off?"

"Well, the second assistant gets two shares—about a hundred and eighty dollars the first year. Next year he'd be first assistant, and have four shares, and senior year, when he's manager, he'd get away with eleven or twelve

hundred dollars if the paper has good business."

"It's a very disgusting way you have of splitting up profits on the *Crime,*" complained McHenry. "Very too much professional. You ought to hoard it up, like the *Lampoon,* and build an idiotic building that nobody uses."

"Well, if you knew how much work it takes to get out this paragon of publicity," declared the junior, "you'd think we're mighty well underpaid, Pep. It's all very well for you to talk—you rich guys who sit back and wear out the cushions on the institute chairs, and——"

"Hold on, boy!" said McHenry. "Stop right there! Do you know whom you're addressing in this flippant manner? Whatever else you do, cut out the childish prattle. I'm the most absogoldarnlutely busted man in the State of Massachusetts at this present moment."

"It isn't a State—it's a commonwealth."

"Let it in—are you sure this long-legged virtuoso's really a baseball player?"

"Pep, I've told you all I know."

"It didn't take long at that," mused McHenry. "And—and so the poor chap camps out there, editing Chinese correspondence for the yellow journals when he might be playing ball. Oh, what a rotten farce!"

"What are you going to do about it?" asked Wilcox sweetly.

"A great deal!" snapped McHenry, jumping to his feet, and seizing his cap. "The trouble with you literary fellows is that you can't ever see over the ink bottle! You're mildewed in this subterranean cavern you call a printing plant. Here I'm spoiling for something to do, and a man who's undoubtedly the best pitcher east of the Mississippi ——"

"His regular position is shortstop," said Wilcox.

"What a disgustingly small nature you have, Wilcox! That's a mere detail. You're a narrow-minded lot of æsthetes, just as I was saying. Instead of making it possible for this crack shortstop—although I'll bet he can pitch like a streak—this man-eating, stone-wall infielder to come out and bat home runs for the glory of the university, you just sit back and watch him perspire in this second-class chicken coop you call a newspaper office! And then, when the Elis beat us a few more times, you'll write some more editorial drool about the good players not coming out for the team! You give me a pain in the neck! Have a heart!"

"But, Pepper," said Wilcox weakly, "we can't elect this gink second assistant manager just because he needs the money——"

"All right," said Pepper savagely. "If you can't, I can!"

"Pepper!"

"Good *night!*"

"Wait a second! Look here——"

He was gone! The most volatile man of a very cosmopolitan university had shot through the door of the sanctum, and fallen upon the recalcitrant Phil Smith with all the ardor of a fiery nature.

"Here!" said McHenry. "Does it make any difference to you if you get first-class, fresh, snappy, exclusive ideas?"

"Wha—what?" said the scribe, gasping.

"You come right along with me to my room—that is, if you care to. I'd like to have you. I've got some ideas that'll make 'em *all* sit up and take notice!"

The scribe bundled his papers into a drawer, and slapped the cover on his machine.

"Lead me to it," he said joyfully.

To the room he had quitted in utter boredom half an hour ago, McHenry

returned in great enthusiasm, and brought out his most vicious-looking cigars for the delectation of his guest. He offered matches, provided two ash trays, outlined the advantages of all the chairs, and finally set about building an open fire, which was wholly unnecessary, for the room was adequately heated by steam.

His Fabian tactics were caused partly by his innate sense of dramatic generalship, and partly because he had allowed his imagination to run away with the facts. His heart had cried out in sympathy for an athlete who couldn't afford to play baseball, and his heart had made certain representations of a very specific nature, but his intellect held no news of sufficient importance to justify the invitation he had so spontaneously extended. At the same time, he knew his own resources. Something would turn up—it always did—and in the meanwhile, the fire was extraordinarily hard to kindle.

"Can't I help you?" asked Smith solicitously.

"No, thanks. Er—I take it the scribing isn't awfully good just now?"

"It's perfectly punk. If you've got any real stuff, it'll cheer me up a lot."

"I don't want—that is, I'm asking out of sheer curiosity—is there anything in it?"

"Only space rates—three dollars a column."

"Holy mackerel!" said McHenry, squatting on the hearth. "Only I suppose," he added hopefully, "you clean up a good wad in football season."

"Well, hardly. They send over an expert."

McHenry fanned the kindling to a gentle blaze, and got awkwardly to his feet.

"That's tough luck. You play football yourself, don't you?"

"Oh, I knocked around a bit at school. I played baseball more."

"I see. Did you make the freshman last year?"

The scribe reddened a little.

"No. I didn't try."

"You didn't *try!*" McHenry's tone was as ingenuous as though he hadn't already heard the narrative from Wilcox.

"No use beating around the bush," said Smith manfully. "I simply couldn't afford it."

"Oh! I beg your pardon."

"It's quite unnecessary. I'm going through on my own, and that isn't all, either. I'm going to law school later, so I've really got to do more than earn my own living. I've got to save something. A man in law school doesn't have much of an opportunity to do things on the side, you know."

"I know," said McHenry soberly. "Now—now about this second assistant managership of the *Crime*."

"Don't speak of it!" said Smith. "There isn't a chance. Not a chance. I can't get out and hustle for ads the way the other candidates do. I suppose I really ought to have taken my name off the list."

"Plenty of time; plenty of time. You've got until February. Er—how's the cigar going? Care for it at all?"

"It's a regular he-cigar, thank you. You were saying something about news?"

"Oh, yes, certainly. I—I remember that very well. I don't know if anything I can say will interest you, of course—— Excuse me a minute, while I look after that fire, will you?"

The germ of an idea incubated in the warmth; McHenry expressed it over his shoulder.

"It's a funny thing," he said, "but in a good many colleges a man like you wouldn't have to hump so hard. You'd be taken care of—so you *could* play baseball. They'd get you an agency to sell cigarettes, or negligee shirts, or something."

"That's one of the reasons I came here," said Smith calmly. "I could have gone to other places and made a good deal of money, only I didn't care to do it that way."

"But you'd come out for the team if the finances were right?"

"You couldn't stop me!"

"Then look here," said McHenry frankly. "We've simply got to get together. I don't know much about work, and you don't apparently know much about anything else, so we ought to make a whale of a good team. We'll have to even up somehow. The team needs infielders like blue blazes—you know that!—and it's a blamed shame for a man like you to sit down at a typewriter and grind out press stuff, when a man like me hasn't anything to do but wait around until it's time to eat again! And I can guess how you feel. I can't even play bean bag myself—but it must be perfect Hades to want to play ball and not be able to."

"That's mighty decent of you," conceded Smith, "but—I guess I'll have to get along the best way I can. There's no particular reason for you to worry about my troubles. Now you really *can* help out, if you want to, with that news item."

"Smith," said his peppery host, "I'm —to tell the truth, maybe I got you up here under false pretenses. You see, Wilcox said something—and I'm interested in the team, of course, and I wanted to have a talk with you—so, speaking hurriedly—I didn't say *news*, you know, I said *ideas!*"

He paused lamely, but the scribe had laid his cigar carefully on the ash tray, brushed his coat free from a few stray shreds of tobacco, and stood up.

"Wait! You don't know yet!"

"I know my time's worth something —not much, I admit, but still——"

"But you've got to get that business managership!" gasped McHenry. "Don't you *see,* man? Look at it! It's the only way out! Twelve hundred in senior year alone—and all sorts of graft in between! And you can play baseball, and——"

"I haven't one chance in a million for that job, McHenry, and you know it!"

"I don't know it! I've got an idea!"

"Spring it!" said Smith.

"It's—it's a way to get ads without going out to solicit 'em! It won't take any of your time, and you'll get that job *sure!* And—why, you ought to be with the squad as soon as it gets in the cage! I'd bet a hundred thousand dollars on it—*any time!*"

"Spring it!" said Smith. "And, by the way, if it's as good as you say it is, why do you pick me out? Why don't you hand it to some of your friends? What's the joke?"

"One thing at a time, please. By gosh, it's—it's staggering! It's like rolling off a log! Why, my dear fellow, all my friends are positively embarrassed with money! Besides, I like to dig out schemes. There's six or seven thousand dollars a year in it! But—will you swear not to breathe a word about my part in it?"

"I'd swear not to breathe for a year for six thousand dollars," said Smith.

McHenry, who had taken to pacing the room excitedly, halted long enough to grab a pipe from the mantel.

"The Harvard Show Rooms—and Advertising Agency," he said, stuffing tobacco into the bowl. "Care for the name at all?"

The scribe stared at him, wrinkled his nose reflectively, sat down, and picked up the cigar from the ash tray.

"My time isn't worth as much as I thought it was," he said cheerfully. "Let's hear the rest of it."

II.

Shortly after dusk, Pepper McHenry slipped out of his luxurious dormitory, and up Linden Street to the avenue,

where two long strides and a short one brought him to a small, freshly decorated shop, whose windows were obscured by tightly drawn shades. At the sound of his key in the lock, some one inside stirred slightly. There was a noise as of an overturned chair, and Phil Smith, erstwhile scribe for New York newspapers, appeared in the doorway, flushed and palpitating.

"Murder and sudden death!" exclaimed McHenry, leaping into the shop, and instantly closing the door. "You must have thought the place was pinched! What's the matter with you, anyway, Smithy? Can't you keep your feet on the floor once in a while?" He became aware of the presence of a third party, and coughed apologetically.

"Mr. Phelps, of Cook & Son," said Smith, in wild excitement; and Mr. Phelps and Mr. McHenry shook hands. Mr. Phelps was a middle-aged gentleman, dressed exactly like the advertisements of collars.

"It's rather a neat little hole, isn't it?" queried McHenry. "Do you—care for it at all?"

Mr. Phelps laughed pleasantly.

"It's a mighty clever idea," he said. "Why, yes. Considering the way we've had to show our goods out here for the last ten years—in the dark corners of somebody else's store—I think it *is* rather a 'neat little hole.'"

"He wants it Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, the first week in every month, in term time," said Smith ecstatically.

"All to himself—exclusive?"

"That's what we were talking about," admitted Mr. Phelps. He resumed his seat, and produced a gold cigarette holder, in which he inserted a gold-tipped cigarette, and smoked in a very gentlemanly manner. "If you'll let me offer you a little gratuitous advice, however, you'll lower your prices, Mr.—McHenry, wasn't it? I should say offhand you're trying to charge about twice too much."

"It can't be done," said Pepper. "Why, look here. You haven't the faintest idea what the rent of this miserable little dump is. You go out and try to get a better price somewhere, and see what they'll say! There's the tariff, and the high cost of living, and the new income tax." He counted them off on his fingers.

"Of course," interposed Smith, "if Mr. Phelps *insists*——"

"If Mr. Phelps *insists,*" said McHenry grimly, "we'll let Hamilton & White have those days. They asked for 'em anyway."

"But it really does seem to me," maintained Mr. Phelps, "that you're a little unreasonable, considering all the circumstances. Now if you boys——"

"I *beg* your pardon," said McHenry, in a voice which had apparently been in cold storage for several months.

The representative of Cook & Son choked over his cigarette.

"I said, if you gentlemen want to make money on this scheme, you'd probably be willing to do a little advertising for us."

"Have you told him yet?" said McHenry to Smith.

"Not yet," faltered Smith to McHenry.

The prime mover in the Show Rooms leaned against the mission desk, and smiled benignly.

"Here's the whole story," he began. "You take this shop the first three days of every month. You get a show window right on the avenue. And right here I want to ask you if you've noticed the gate across the street? No? Well, that's where all the Lizzie-boys go into the Yard for lectures. When they come out again—and you want to remember that they've got to come out some time—they see this joint staring them right in the face. They can't miss it. In the window you'll have your dis-

play, and over the door you'll have a sign something like this: 'Cook & Son, of New York: Clothiers—Haberdashers—Hatters. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday.' Do you think that's any good?"

"Surely it's good!"

"It's a lot better than having a salesman come out here once a month with a lot of samples about as big as a soda cracker, and camping in a drug store to show his stuff," said McHenry scathingly. "I wonder that you New York concerns ever sold a cent's worth that way."

"Yes, we can show a good line here, but——"

"Let me do all the butting," pleaded McHenry. "Now, to back up your display, you take half a page in the *Crimson* each day you're here. You simply send your copy and cuts to Mr. Smith here, and he'll see to all the details. You advertise your line in the *Crime,* and show it here, and that's all there is to it. You've always done a pretty fair business in Cambridge, Mr. Phelps, but you ought to double it when you have a regular stand. And you'll be in darned good company, too, because we're booked solid—or, rather, we think we're going to be—and only first-class people can get in here."

"Of course, he could send the order and copy direct to the *Crime,*" said Smith weakly.

"Not in a thousand years he couldn't!"

"It doesn't make any real difference, Pep!"

"It makes all the difference in the world!"

"Let it go," said Mr. Phelps pacifically. "The main point is the rent. We'd agree to the advertising all right. We've always used small space in the *Crimson;* but, as you say, it would be very advisable to tie our display up to some half pages."

"I told you so!" said McHenry to Smith.

"You do forget, I think, that there isn't much profit for us in selling one suit of clothes, Mr. McHenry. I doubt if the big tobacconists, or the sporting-goods people, and the other out-of-town concerns, who send salesmen out here, can possibly use this place of yours, and fail to make money—but just take this one point; take the tariff——"

"Whoa!" said McHenry. "Once when I was dizzy with the heat I took Ec. One—that's Economics, Mr. Phelps—I know you *save* about four dollars a suit on that new tariff! I know you!"

The representative blushed warmly.

"Pepper!" said the agonized shortstop.

"Keep your shirt on!" retorted McHenry. "If you don't, Phelps might try to sell you some new ones."

"And you'd expect settlement when?"

"In advance," said McHenry promptly. "We'd expect your check at least two days before you show up."

"Oh, that's ridiculous!"

"Now wait a bit!" said McHenry, motioning Smith to silence. "Look here, Mr. Phelps, we expect to have somebody from out of town, showing goods here every day of every week. We've had applications from sixteen firms already. They used to come out here, as you know perfectly well, and be mighty thankful to get desk room anywhere they could find it. Some of the little fellows will double up on this joint, but the big ones like you will have it exclusively for a few days at a time. We offer you a clean shop, with a front on the avenue, and there are plenty of people who want it if you don't. Only if you sign up now, you get it on the first of next month, and you'll be the first concern in here. That ought to count for something."

"Pepper!" gasped the ex-scribe in desperation.

"Let her run, Phil—I'm only getting warmed up. This is a unique institution, Mr. Smith—I mean, Mr. Phelps. You ought to be wise enough to see that a couple of undergraduates can't get such a frightful lot of credit in Cambridge. If we don't pay the rent by the fifth of the month, for instance, we'll get shot out of here so fast that we'll land in Somerville ahead of the dynamite. We've got to have the check in advance. Also the check for advertising. Phil, give him a *Crime* rate card."

"I've got one," said Mr. Phelps shortly. "Now about a lease—a contract."

For the first time, McHenry looked nonplused.

"You write it, Phil," he said. "We'll have to get some printed for us later on."

"You're so correct—so *very* correct, Mr. McHenry," grinned the man from Cook & Son, "that I hope you'll make it perfectly legal."

"'We, Cook & Son,' dictated McHenry steadfastly, 'agree to hire the Harvard Show Rooms, one room on the ground floor of 9876 Mass. Avenue, Cambridge, Massachusetts, U. S. A.'—is that legal enough for you, Mr. Phelps?—'on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday on the first week of each month, from September to June inclusive. And on each of those days, we'll use a half page of space in the *Crime*—I mean the Harvard *Crimson*—sending the check to Phil Smith, care of the Harvard Show Rooms, on the previous Friday. And on that same Friday we'll also send a check for the use of the rooms, which will be fifteen dollars a day. And whether we use the rooms or not, we'll send the check—both checks, just the same. In other words, so that nobody will try to get funny with this contract, we intend the Show Rooms to draw down forty-five dollars of our money every month, and the *Crime* is to get three half pages of space, even if by and by freezes over. We mean business!'—is that legal enough for you, Mr. Phelps?"

The representative, convulsed with laughter, affixed his name to the remarkable document.

"And now," he chuckled, "suppose we do a little advertising in your college paper, anyway? Why wouldn't it be a good idea to use—say a half page every day from now until we open up? A sort of general announcement of the Show Rooms in general, and Cook & Son in particular? Would you agree to let us do that, instead of announcing it yourselves?"

"Why, I suppose we might," said McHenry slowly.

"You bet we will!" shrilled Smith.

"And—of course it's out of the ordinary—but I certainly do admire your originality in this thing, and I understand about the credit end of it, too—so I'll have an order for the advertising made out as soon as I get back to New York, and send it, with both the checks, right along. If this idea works out as I think it will, it'll be an asset to us, too—and you're both very clever boys—I should say, young men."

"Thank you," said McHenry soberly. "And don't forget to send the checks to Mr. Smith, will you? That's really the biggest part of the scheme."

When the clothing man had gone, McHenry smiled broadly, and held out his hand. Smith grasped it fervently.

"Oh, Pepper!" he said. "Oh—Pepper!"

"Ahem!" coughed Pepper briskly. "Well, now, old top, you see how it's done, don't you? This joint ought to make money on the rent alone, and if the advertising these fellows will do doesn't get you that assistant managership, I'll—I'll eat my hat! Remember this, though—a lot of 'em like Phelps will think you're an easy mark because you're in college. Don't let 'em scare you. Take a tip from Pepper—go after 'em! They can't afford *not* to use us!

Do you think any reputable house would dare to send a salesman out here to hang around a drug store and show samples on the prescription desk, when there's a place like this in town? The answer is, No. Well, do you think you can run it all right?"

"Do I? We ought to make a killing, Pepper!"

"Not we—you."

"Me? What?"

"You heard me."

"But—I don't get it!"

"My dear boy," said Pepper gently, "I can't stick any longer. It's quite impossible. Why, you don't know what my father would say if he thought I was interested in a money-making scheme. Although," he appended reflectively, "I don't quite know what he'll say when he finds out I've spent most of my year's allowance already, and the snow isn't here yet. Well—he gives me enough. I can't kick. You see, Phil, I just planned to get this thing going for you, and here's where I get off."

"B-but—Pep——"

"That's my middle name," said McHenry. "Good luck to you, old scout."

"But I can't—why, you've no reason at all! You've simply—you've set me up in business, Pepper McHenry! And you've got to share it with me!"

"Phil," said his friend, "if you can play ball as well as I think you can, some day I'll be proud of having loaned you one idea. And I'll be darned proud to have done it, too! And if you ever mention my name in connection with this joint, I'll wallop you over the eye!" He laid his hand on the doorknob, and burst out laughing. "Don't look so tragic, Phil," he begged. "That's just the kind of guy I am, you know. I never carried anything through in my life. I just sort of get things started. Besides, I've got to write the Pudding show for next year pretty soon, and I wouldn't have the time to dub around here anyway. Just one thing more—don't offer anybody too much for his money. Did you see Phelps fall over himself for that set of announcements in the *Crime?* He's really going to advertise *us* from now until he opens up. And just before he sprang that, I'd made up my mind to announce us in full pages in the *Crime,* and pay for the ads myself!"

"But, Pep! You guaranteed the rent—and—and all——"

"Don't worry, old top! I paid one month's rent—I borrowed the money from Wilcox, by the way—and you can pay me back as soon as you get some advance checks. So long—you old calamity howler! Come in and see me some time!" He went out, laughing, and ran headlong into an inoffensive sophomore, who was knocked off the sidewalk into four inches of accumulated rainfall.

"For Pat's sake, Pep McHenry!" growled the indignant one. "You're the limit! I don't believe you ever thought of anybody else's comfort in all your life!"

Over the deep green of Soldiers' Field the last shadows of the afternoon were slowly lengthening when a slim young man rose from the Harvard bench, and strolled unconcernedly to the plate. Near second base a frenzied senior danced impatiently; at third a stolid junior waited for the supreme effort, and guyed the Yale third baseman as he waited. The blue-stockinged infielders closed in for the last man. From grand stand and bleachers came alternate roars of hope, and inspiration, and pleading.

"Paste it, Smithy—*paste it!*"

"Last man, everybody—play it safe!"

"Takes one to hit, old boy!"

"Two runs to win, old top—one to tie!"

"Wait for a good one, Smithy!"

"Lean against the trade-mark—ooh!"

The Yale pitcher shook his head at the catcher's signal. Twice before had this slim young Harvard shortstop caught a fast one on the end of his bat, and sent it far out toward the marshes for extra-base hits. Now, with two on bases and two out, and two runs needed for Harvard to win, the Yale pitcher shook his head until the man behind the plate signaled a drop. Then the pitcher nodded, and put the last ounce of his strength into the delivery. And Phil Smith, who was now in a position to care little for the high cost of living, knocked a perfectly good dollar-and-a-quarter baseball into the Charles River.

McHenry, Wilcox, and one Ted Sewall, fought their way arm in arm over the narrow bridge, and through the happy crowd, up to the equally crowded and happy Square. They talked little, but what they said was pregnant.

"Four to three," said Sewall needlessly. The others had also stayed through the game.

"*Didn't* he lean against it?" pleaded Wilcox hoarsely. "Didn't he?"

"I suppose you noticed that Smithy knocked in all four runs at one time or another, and saved the game about eleven times every inning," said McHenry.

"Some boy," said Sewall.

"Cleverest I ever knew," conceded Wilcox. "They say he's cleaned up over a thousand dollars on those Show Rooms—somebody's there every day of the week."

"*And* on the busy end of the *Crime*," said McHenry.

"Oh, well, we couldn't keep him off. He brought in so darned much advertising from the people who used the Rooms that we *had* to elect him. He'll make good, too."

"They also say he's some little feet-ball player," observed Sewall. "It's a good thing he caught that idea, isn't it? If he'd kept on grinding the way he had been, we'd have lost the Princeton series this year, too. Well—let's shoot a game of billiards until dinner time."

"I'm with you," said Wilcox. "Pepper?"

"Not me," yawned McHenry. "I haven't the nerve. I owe 'em about seventy-nine dollars right now."

"You make me tired, Pep," said Wilcox severely. "You ought to be mighty well ashamed of yourself. There's a man like Phil Smith working his way through, and paying his debts like an honest man, and you've got a couple of thousand allowance, and owe money like a railroad!"

"See you later, Pep," added Sewall. "But I'd advise you to pay up pretty soon—these folks begin to get anxious about now, you know. And as a friendly tip—if you want to borrow any money, I guess Phil's got all you want. I think it's pretty disgusting for you to let a greasy grind beat you out on the question of paying your debts! You're a degrading influence! See you later!"

McHenry watched his friends disappear under the brilliantly illuminated sign of the smoke shops, and turned away with a queer little sigh. The bulletin pasted on the front window attracted his attention, and he glanced at it reminiscently. There were two items:

End of seventh: Yale, 3; Harvard, 2.
Final score: Harvard, 4; Yale, 3.
SMITH GOT ANOTHER HOMER.

"Oh, well," said McHenry to himself, yawning. "Oh, well—I saved their blamed old game for 'em, anyway!"

In the next issue Holworthy Hall will tell us the story of a Harvard man whose ball-playing ability suffered a mysterious slump; and how "Pepper" McHenry brought him back to condition.

All the World's a Fillum

By Robert Emmet MacAlarney

"All the world's a fillum, and all the men and women picture players," according to Jake Miggins, who stages a six-reel society elopement in Westchester

HORATIO BLESSINGTON minced no words with Theodore Murray, junior. To begin with, the young man had chosen a malapropos moment for the interview; it had been a trying day in the Cañon of Finance, and the senior partner of Blessington & Co. was trying to cool off upon a side veranda, Nashi, the Japanese butler, a rapid-fire Ganymede with Scotch and soda.

The broker had been vaguely conscious that his daughter must be playing tennis with one of the juvenile flanneled fools who flocked to The Gables of an afternoon; laughter and the thumping of balls against rackets told him that. He frowned over the bid-and-asked column, in the *Evening Post,* dismissing the impression. And then, in the midst of his tent sulking, enter Theodore Murray, junior, with puppylike assurance in his request to be allowed to marry Helen. Even the chauffeur, stabling a new French car in the garage, heard the explosion; and Nashi, for all of his samurai imperturbability, dropped a freshly uncorked soda bottle upon a grass porch rug.

Teddy Murray found Miss Helen Blessington, fingers in her ears, pretending to hide behind the net.

"What *didn't* he say?" she murmured.

"It isn't funny, Helen," said young Murray. "Before he blew up—I might have known better than to tackle him this afternoon, for it's been a bad day in the Street—he asked me what I was earning."

"I never thought of that," the girl confessed. "We shall need some money to pay bills with, shan't we?"

"That's just the trouble," admitted the flushed-faced youth, making unfilial passes with a racket at the head of an astral stock manipulator. "He might have done the handsome, though, for a year or two—not that I'd have expected motors and a yacht."

"Well, I don't know," mused Helen Blessington. "If he ever offers them, don't refuse."

The boy grinned sarcastically. "I won't," he assured her. "When he asked me how much I was earning, I replied, as nearly as I can remember —that confounded Jap butler was guffawing with his eyes, though his face, otherwise, was as straight as a string —'The firm of Blessington & Co., which hired me last June, after I got through Yale is paying me seven dollars a week. But Murphy has promised me a raise."

"Murphy! Who is Murphy?"

"He's the Co.," the youth informed her. "I run errands for him. That's all I am, Helen, honest—an errand boy. It'll be nice to go back to my triennial at New Haven, and get up at the class dinner and say I'm an errand boy. Won't it?"

Miss Blessington, with feminine keenness divining the exact moment which demanded tender sympathy, tee-

tered upon her sneakers, and kissed the tip of his sunburned nose.

"You are a very dear—errand boy," she declared. "And the minute you save enough to let us run away and get married, bring on your rope ladders."

The young man seized her by both arms, his courage rebounding. "You mean that?" he cried.

For a second she was sober. "Yes, I mean it, Teddy," she answered. "I can't go on much longer being lost in this big house, with occasional glimpses of dad, fuming over the market quotations, and only Miss Spriggs to chatter to. But it will take at least a fortnight to starve dad out, after we do it. I know his stubbornness is asbestos lined for that long. So, somehow, you've got to scrape together——"

"The sinews of war," said Teddy Murray. "That's the proper term in outfitting for an offensive campaign. Somehow, somewhere, I've got to raise one thousand dollars."

"Oh, Teddy!" exclaimed Miss Blessington, dancing a lonely little tango upon the service court, "do you suppose you could? But you must earn it. You mustn't borrow. I shouldn't care to elope on borrowed money. That would spoil everything."

"Don't worry; I shan't have the cheek to borrow car fare to Gretna Green," agreed the sunburned youth.

"And now run along," she ordered. "I've got to rehearse in front of the looking-glass for facing father and Spriggs at dinner."

"Wait a moment!" cried Blessington & Co.'s Yale messenger boy. "I overlooked something." He ran swiftly up the veranda steps, shouldering the Japanese servant to reach the head of the house. "By the way," he announced, "I forgot to say that I wish to offer my resignation, to take effect at once. Will you tell Mr. Murphy tomorrow?"

"You wish to what!" bellowed the gray-mustached broker, crackling his newspaper.

"To resign, of course!" explained Theodore Murray, junior. "I'm going to stop being a messenger boy. I'll talk to you again, sir, about that other little matter."

Nashi actually thought his employer would have an apoplectic paroxysm before the sunburned youth disappeared. But the head of Blessington & Co. emerged finally from his fog of fury. "If that young whelp shows up here again, whether Miss Helen objects or not," he thundered, "throw him off the grounds!"

"Yes, sir," the butler assented.

"And if he's too scrappy for you to do it alone——"

The servant smiled. "Jujutsu very good at such immergentsies," he remarked. Nashi prided himself upon his recently acquired English. It would come in handily against the day when the red ball of Nippon should ripple across seas to found a new empire. Nashi was one of the million honest Japanese schoolboys, cramming busily all over the world.

Young Murray loafed complacently over his breakfast the next morning. He watched Frederick Tracy, his host, bolt rolls and coffee, to make the eight-forty-five train. It was pleasant to know he shouldn't have to hustle around under the Murphy eye that day. He took a ten o'clock express for town; time enough to worry over being jobless when he reached the Grand Central. There were only a few persons in the club car, including Harper Dunn, who had in tow a hard-faced man, with high cheek bones, rasping voice, and gay-banded straw hat riding upon a shock of stiff, black hair—the whole set off by a striped effect, in Norfolk jacket summer tweed.

"Hello, Teddy!" said Dunn, with apparent relief. "Have a cigar, and meet Mr. Miggins, the moving-picture man.

He came out yesterday to get the thirty-footer races. Mr. Miggins moves to amend Mr. Shakespeare. He says the version should read: 'All the world's a film—Miggins & Donnelly's six-reel preferred, for choice.'"

The black-haired stranger tossed his hat upon an empty chair, ran ringed hands through his sable mane, and nodded.

"Sure," he agreed. "Life's a fillum—I'm a fillum, you're a fillum." Theodore Murray found one of the movie entrepreneur's digits menacing his chest. "Look out of that there car window. What do you see but one long fillum—cows, and fences, and what not? I ain't joshing, Mr. Murray, although Mr. Dunn seems to think I'm dotty on my business. Amurica's just getting wise to the fillum thing. That's the answer, when some one asks you why even the back-yard shows is averaging more'n summer stock companies."

"Remember, I'm coming to see your cup-race pictures," Dunn interrupted. "And if they don't show me spilled overside while rounding the stakeboat, I'll know you weren't on the job."

The ringed hands gesticulated so accentedly that young Murray found himself wondering whether Miggins was really their owner's original tribal name.

"You'll be in it, all right. I tell you what's the trouble with you society folks: You ain't got onto the fact yet that you're just as much fillums as the tenements. You're willing to go slumming by watching the movies show hall bedrooms and miners' cabins, and the inside of jail cells, with women weeping over husbands and brothers that has went wrong. You're willing to go movie slumming, all right."

"By Jove, Teddy!" exclaimed Harper Dunn. "There's something in that, isn't there? Only last week I heard the blond chit who's been visiting Lydia Torrance say: 'I've often heard about kitchens, but I never saw one until they threw it on the screens when we went to the nickelodeon at Birch Point for a lark.'"

"She's a fool!" grumbled the emancipated messenger boy. "She ought to be put to washing dishes and using a broom."

As he spoke, it flashed into his mind that, without one thousand dollars, his runaway honeymoon with Miss Helen Blessington would rapidly resolve itself into just such domestic routine; probably Helen knew as little as Lydia Torrance's guest about kitchens. Still, there was always boarding, he reflected; but that was so promiscuous.

"I mean it," continued Miggins. "The time's gone by when the public hasn't a right to know what the rest of the world looks like while it's doing things. The fillums are reg'lar little missionaries; that's why they're putting 'em in the schools. If you can shoot six-reel fillums at captured crooks, on their way to be rogues' galleried, why shouldn't you be allowed to take the Four Hundred trotting trial heats at Newport? Think of the hist'ry you'd be helping make."

"Look here," smiled Dunn; "you chaps oughtn't to kick. You do lots of business at society weddings. I know three families, last month, who hired men to sharpshoot the whole thing."

"Sure," admitted the movie impresario. "We did two of them jobs, and did 'em well. But that's all staged stuff, and quiet. What we're willing to pay coin for is something snappy, with real society folks in it. If some of the dude drunks would tip off Miggins & Donnelly before pulling off the fool stunts that gets 'em in the papers, they'd have a bundle to think about the day after, instead of only a headache."

Teddy Murray regarded the tweeded and ringed stranger with a new interest. This bizarre chance acquaintance of Harper Dunn was an enthusiast; he

believed in his calling. He was speaking as genuinely as a sugar senator might warm up to a new tariff bill, or a thirty-third-degree fan discuss the number of balls Matty pitched in his last time out at the Polo Grounds.

"What's your list of prices?" Murray asked. "For instance, what would you pay for a really high-class elopement—pretty girl, and all the rest of it?"

"I'd advance a thousand on spec, in a minute," said the movie man. "Mebbe more—if the girl was a good-looker. Most society dames ain't, I've found—no matter what the papers say."

In a clamoring crowd at the Grand Central, the three parted, but not before young Murray had quietly asked for, and received, one of Miggins & Donnelly's business cards.

At first, the next day, Miggins thought the swell he had met in the club car was jesting.

"What's the game—trying to kid me along, just because I blew off a bit of steam over a cigar?" he demanded, when Murray put in an appearance at the Weehawken movie laboratory.

His visitor colored. It wasn't easy to go out and throttle the world for a necessary thousand, not even for sake of a brown-eyed girl out at The Gables, who would fly to the uttermost parts of the earth—or as far as a single thousand would take them—with him, if he was successful.

"This is on the level," he snapped. "I'll tell you why."

Hot and angry as he was, he felt Miggins could be relied upon not to tell. Somehow, he was sure of that.

Only a chosen few were let into the secret. Two photographers would be stationed at the beginning and end of the runaway, with motor-relief laps along the route. Miggins also enlisted a one-time middleweight near-champion, who had grown too fat to longer delude boxing clubs into taking him on—and Maymie Gruber.

Teddy Murray had objected when informed that Skate Brogan, an ex-prize fighter, was to participate. "He'll make your picture a joke. It doesn't matter to me, of course. I get a thousand for this insane stunt. But not that bruiser!"

Jake Miggins slapped him on the shoulder. "It does you credit, son," he said, "to want to save the house from making a flivver. But you never seen this here Skate Brogan act. He ain't got a teaspoonful of thinks inside his marble dome—that's true; but his face is his fortune, as the milkmaid onct said. Any guy that can fake a championship-belt fight can fake a fillum. And Skate faked more bouts, before they got wise to him, than any bluff slugger in the ring."

Skate was to double in brass, as the minstrel and circus advertisements have it. He was to be the furious father, pursuing the runaway pair, at the outset. Then he was to change into a sort of Southern colonel, with drooping mustaches and a goatee, who would welcome the runaways at his home, and send hurriedly for a clergyman, who would triumphantly marry them beneath a paper-wistaria bower. Afterward, Skate would again double in brass—going within and resuming the garments of the outraged parent, who was to make a final appearance, too late to stop the proceedings.

Skate was conscientious about his rôle. He stood outside the offices of Blessington & Co., in Broad Street, for many hours, awaiting the comings out and goings in of the man he was to impersonate. "I got him," he declared. "You c'n fire when ready, Gridley."

Maymie Gruber? Suffice it to say that Teddy Murray had not the slightest objection to her presence in the cast.

"I've been behind the toy counter at

Slacy's, my dear," she told him, when introduced. "After you've made the woolly little lambs say 'Ba-a!' and the dinky little cows go 'Moo!' for a million kids and their mammas, every Christmas for ye-urs and ye-urs, you couldn't s'prise me with a diamond tarara in an oyster stew. I'm on. You need the cush as much as you need the goil. At that, maybe Old Skeesicks will loosen up after he gets the first tellyphone call. There's nothing like a tellyphone call, my dear, at such a time. Marg'rite Jones, my side partner at the toy lamb and cow counter, hiked to Hoboken one evening with the son of a police captain. He was a awful old pirate, swore something turr'ble. 'But I melted him like one of them wax dolls that got too near the electric lights last Christmas,' she says to me, when I goes to offer congrats. Try a tellyphone call, kid. Go to it!"

Miss Maymie Gruber was to be the dainty daughter of Skate Brogan, and would be photographed throwing her arms around the runaway bride and showering all hands with paper-wistaria blossoms.

"We're going to call it 'Young Lockinvar, 1913,'" said Miggins. "That's Donnelly's idea. He went to grammar school onct; says he got the name out of a fourth reader. Though what locking in has to do with breaking out to get spliced is more'n I can see. Y'ain't nervous, are you, son? Believe me, I'm going to be the best best man a bridegroom ever had. I've got a thousand stake in this wedding."

There are ways of communicating with the girl you are going to elope with, even if you have been forbidden the house. Miss Blessington motored to town with Miss Spriggs to shop now and then. This meant luncheon or afternoon tea, over which Miss Blessington often lingered, while Miss Spriggs ran out for a half hour, to do a few errands of her own. Thus Teddy Murray found her, in an Avenue corner, a week after his decree of banishment had been issued.

"You have just ten minutes," she whispered, glancing at the gun-metal watch upon her wrist. "Spriggs has taken a Broadway car down to Slacy's. She wants to get a toy for a nephew in Jersey."

Young Murray spluttered over his oolong. "Slacy's," he gasped. "I know. Where the cows say 'Moo!' and the woolly lambs go 'Ba-a!' and the electric light melts the wax dolls, if you put them too near overnight."

Miss Blessington stared at the man she had promised to run away with. "Perhaps it is the heat," she remarked anxiously to the teapot. "Don't giggle in that stupid fashion, Teddy. The waiter is staring."

"Forgive me, Helen," he said. "But you mustn't blame me. I've got the thousand."

"You mean it?"

Stealthily, lest the waiter should see, the youth produced ten yellow centuries, surrounded by a rubber band.

"And it isn't borrowed, either," he announced. He did not tell her how it had been earned. There was no need for that just now. Besides—and here the insidious Miggins germ betrayed itself—her knowing might spoil a six-reel film. In the recesses of his awakened initiative, young Murray had begun to turn over a possible means of adding to that original thousand, perhaps enough to encompass the motor and yacht that had been mentioned in Westchester.

"I'll be alone with Spriggs on Monday," Miss Blessington said, before he got up to go—the gun-metal watch had ticked off exactly nine and three-quarters minutes. "Have the car driven up to the porch. I'll pack just a few things in my straw suit case. We can telephone dad that evening."

"Maymie Gruber advises that," he

agreed. "Only yesterday she said to me: 'There's nothing like a tellyphone call, my dear, at such a time.'"

Again Miss Blessington would have called his strange manner into question, but a far-off glimpse of Miss Spriggs, primly entering the revolving door of the lobby, made the youth decamp toward the palm-room grill.

"Monday—sure!" she lip read, as he turned at the threshold.

"Y'ain't nervous?" Jake Miggins, stage manager of the new six reel which was to make M. & D. rivals sit up and take notice, asked Teddy Murray that a dozen times motoring out to The Gables. "You look fine, son. Even the back-yard East Side nickelodeons'll know we ain't running off anything phony on 'em. As I was telling you on the train that day, you can't really fake the society thing. The houses'll know Skate Brogan and Maymie Gruber is dolled up a little, but s'long as we got the principals genuine, we deliver the goods."

Young Murray glanced at the car following. Skate Brogan, ex-middleweight, had not been made up to resemble Horatio Blessington in vain. And as for Maymie Gruber, the stool-pigeon bridegroom of the movies ceased counting the beat of his pulses, to marvel that the son of a police captain had plucked Marg'rite from behind Slacy's toy counter instead of this slender, well-groomed girl—Miggins & Donnelly's movie laboratory, over at Weehawken, boasts of a wardrobe that would outfit a department store. Maymie saw his glance, and waved a white-gloved hand. "Cheer up, kiddo!" was what he fancied she called to him. He tried to follow her advice.

There is not much travel along the side road that leads to The Gables, at eleven in the morning. Where the road meets the turnpike, one of the reel boxes, screwed into the tonneau of another of M. & D.'s flock of motors, was halted in ambush. The tripod could sweep the approach for a quarter mile. Maymie Gruber climbed into this machine; she would not be needed for a while.

In a third car, Jake Miggins and Skate Brogan puffed up the driveway behind Murray and his chauffeur—a man of parts, this chauffeur, Miggins had avowed, who would hurdle a stake and rider fence, or shoot off the front deck of a moving ferryboat, if asked; in fact, was said to have done both, for pay. There was a screwed tripod also in a smaller roadster, which would first rake the porte-cochère and then race alongside the frantic and gesticulating Brogan. When the caravan reached the turnpike, the ambushed camera car would take up the shadowing, while the original scout machine would take a short cut, to be ready for the final tableau.

Miggins had rented, for one day, an unsold cottage at Tiverton-by-the-Tappan, giving the real-estate agent with whom he trafficked ten dollars, and the promise to include in at least one film the advertising sign beside the house. Already the M. & D. clergyman impersonator, a retired painter, who had contracted lead poisoning and a story-bookish ministerial pallor, was seeing that the last-act props were in place.

"I once saw a show called 'The Wizard of Oz,'" Teddy Murray thought, as he shot into premises where he was taboo. "It was a weird show, but no weirder than this."

Miss Blessington was ready; she had been ready for a half hour, too ready to escape the basilisk eye of Miss Spriggs, who even then was telephoning to a Broad Street number in the Cañon of Finance that it might be wise if the head of the firm were to come right home. Meanwhile, Nashi, Japanese butler, was observing the girl's maneuvers upon the veranda. So it came about that before Murray's chauffeur had fin-

ished braking, Miss Blessington gave a screech of joy, and pattered down the steps, throwing herself and a straw suit case into the arms of the youth who held the tonneau door open. He was fascinated by the clicking sound of the reel turner just behind.

"Look here, youse," he heard the chauffeur growling. "I got all I can do to drive. If there's any more Jap bell boys need beating up, do a little yourself."

They were sliding down the driveway then. Theodore Murray, looking over his shoulder, saw Nashi brushing gravel from his white jacket. The tripodded touring car had missed nothing. He could see Jake Miggins rubbing his hands at this unexpected windfall. An attack by a Japanese butler had not been nominated in the bond. And, a second later, evidently having clattered up the side steps of the porch, the metamorphosed Skate Brogan appeared, yelping and brandishing a walking stick. The astonished butler was dramatic nuts for Skate, as well as Miggins. The ex-prize fighter fairly turned berserk as he approached; he hooked to the chin, timing his swing beautifully. Nashi went down, dreaming that he was viewing ten thousand red balls of Nippon all at once.

Young Murray, a thousand dollars of Miggins & Donnelly's money in his pocket, the exhilaration of the movie game beginning to bubble in his veins, was clutched by an awe-stricken bride-to-be, who also had glanced around, attracted by the butler's howls before oblivion overtook him.

"Heavens, Teddy!" she screamed, in the rasp of tires. "It's dad! I thought he was in town! And there's a car with some dreadful camera men following us!"

"You don't have to speak no lines this far off, miss," volunteered the chauffeur, showing at the lane turn. "It's only when you're near enough for the audience to understand."

Miss Blessington shrank from the kindly meant advice of Young Lochinvar's charioteer. "How very impudent, Teddy," she murmured. "Why did you hire such a fresh driver?"

M. & D.'s crack car pilot turned around once more, grinning broadly. "D'you mean to tell me this is on the level—that she don't know?" he demanded. He read his answer in the girl's startled face. "Well, they cert'nly gotta hand it to you, pal," he finished. "They cert'nly gotta hand it to you."

"Teddy Murray!" It was a soprano note that Jake Miggins and his entourage heard distinctly. They also saw the youth gather a frantic maiden into his arms, trying to soothe incipient hysteria.

"Now, that's what I call good acting!" purred Miggins to his reel turner. "The girl's gitting into the spirit of the thing. She's a good sport."

"She's scared to death, that's what she is," declared Maymie Gruber wrathfully to young Murray, an hour later, at Tiverton-by-the-Tappan. "Take it from me, you men is all brutes. As I said to Marg'rite, when she ran off with the police captain's son: 'The best of 'em is brutes.' "

Miss Blessington did not recoil when the former toy-counter girl at Slacy's pinched her cheeks and kissed her adieu. The world seemed one big arc of clicking movie cameras to Miss Blessington, with Teddy Murray, traitor, pointing them at her.

"Now," ordered Maymie Gruber, as the M. & D. cohort rang down the curtain on a field morning of it, "break the speed limit gettin' into C'necticut. And don't forget the tellyphone, dearie. You c'n put a heartbreak into a tellyphone wire somethin' fierce."

No, the newspapers did not have it the next morning; the Connecticut ham-

let, where Theodore Murray, junior, acquired a wife, was remote from even the Winsted correspondent, that argus-eyed publicity getter of the commonwealth. And it was not until Thursday that a taxicab took bride and bridegroom from Fulham Manor station to The Gables. Neither Miss Spriggs nor Nashi were in evidence. After the traditional weeping upon parental shoulder, Mrs. Murray retired to her own room, to put on a frock other than the spare one she had been able to transport in her straw suit case.

"Now," began Horatio Blessington, "what was that you said over the phone about doing business?"

"I had to have the first thousand," explained young Murray. "And I shall need more. So what I propose is that you make me an offer for a very good six-reel moving-picture film." He interpreted, with some difficulty. "It's either buy, or be on every screen in Greater New York next week. They sell selected bits of those films to the papers, too," he added.

"Murray," remarked Blessington to his one-time messenger boy, "this is blackmail!" He smote the library table until the electrolier jingled.

"Of course it is," agreed the youth. "But as I've just finished a kidnaping, why let a little thing like blackmail stand in the way?"

Which pregnant utterance may account for the fact that Theodore Murray, junior, is now in partnership with his father-in-law. The Cañon of Finance needs young blood like that, unafraid to announce its devotion to short and long principle.

"It's a pity, son," Jake Miggins lamented, when he handed over the films. "But I got a good price for 'em, and sold a picture machine into the bargain, so it's all in a day's work. If you ever want to take another shy at camera acting, you and the girl was fine——"

"Nothing doing!" declared young Murray hastily.

The moving-picture machine was his Christmas present to his father-in-law. He hired an M. & D. man to come over from the Weehawken laboratory and give the first performance of "Young Lochinvar, 1913 Model."

The part of the six-reel that Horatio Blessington admired most was where Skate Brogan, berserk, left-hooked Nashi, the honest Japanese schoolboy, to the point of the jaw.

JOB COMFORTS HIMSELF

JOB HEDGES, whom William Sulzer defeated for the governorship of New York, was introduced as an after-dinner speaker by a toastmaster who twitted him about having lost the race.

"All I have to say about that," Hedges came back in his speech, "is that I got mine—and got it good. New York got hers—and got it bad."

A SIGN OF SUPERIORITY

TWO Pullman porters, representing different railroads, stood in the Union Station in St. Louis, and progressed from friendly gossip to heated argument. Their quarrel centered about which one worked for the better road. Their claims, figures, and arguments came fast and furious.

At last the tall, thin porter settled the dispute with these classic words:

"Go on, nigger; we kills mo'e people than you fellows tote."

Faith and the .300 Hitters

By Hugh S. Fullerton

Told by the second baseman. The remarkable manner in which the San Antone ball team won the pennant when it looked as though they were going to be the cellar champions

I AIN'T sayin' there is or there ain't nothin' in this faith-cure business. Some say there is, and then again some guys that knows a lot more about such things than I ever will know say there ain't, and that it's all bunk. I don't want no one comin' round here tryin' to tell me how to play second base unless he can get out there with the spangles and spikes on and show me, and I ain't tryin' to tell these wise heads anything about their business, but at the same time it's darned funny about the way the San Antone team win that pennant.

Ain't I never told you about that? I always claimed it was old Jack Davies that win that pennant, although he never got no credit for it, and the next season they tried to cut his salary, and canned him. Sent him up in the Arkansaw League somewhere; and I guess he's playin' there yet. Anyhow, Lee Garvin is, and he's 'most as old as Jack.

They said Jack was all in. Well, if he was, just give me a bunch of all-in dead ones like him, and I'd make them Athletics think they was just commencin' to learn how the game is played.

Jack couldn't hit much, and he was awful slow, and lamed up from the Charley horse, and muscle bound in the shoulder, and his arm was bum. So he couldn't hardly arch 'em acrost to first, and he was weak on grounders, and not very strong on fly balls, and didn't cover much ground, and he always was weak touchin' runners, but, man, man, how he could win ball games! There was a man with a noddle for you! He didn't need no arms or legs to play baseball. Honest, he was born without a bone in his head, and none never growed.

Yes, sirree; faith cure or no faith cure, it was old Jack Davies that win that pennant after it looked like we was goin' to be the cellar champions.

All right! All right! Just hold your base a second and I'll tell you how he win it. How the dickens do you expect a fellow to tell you all about it, if you don't understand who Jack was?

Well, sir, that spring we had the best ball club that ever played in Texas, which, believe me, comes pretty near makin' it the best ball club that ever played anywhere. Texas is the little old spot where baseball was made, and comes natural. Why, when Texas had to step in and keep Mexico from lickin' the eternal daylights out of the United States, Ted Sullivan was down there organizin' major leagues.

They growed ball players in them days. If a club wanted to find a three-hundred-and-fifty hitter who could field, and throw, and run, all it had to do was to point a telescope toward Texas and pick him out of the bunch. There was a Delehanty or a Cobb on every ranch in the State. But that spring we had the best team ever put together in Texas, bar none.

Old Tommy Terhune was manager, and he was a pretty wise fish himself. Nothin' carpy about managers in them

days. A manager had to know more than his players did—and it was considerable job to do it. I was playin' second base. Billy Grossman was on third, Pop Pence was in center, and hittin' fourth; Silence and Fun Olson was playin' first, Micky Ryan catchin', with Dorgan and Long in the outfield. Black Bill Brown, Harry Shepherd, Dick Coyle, and Lefty Lanigan were pitchin', and old Jack Davies was at short. Some team, eh? Why, say, we played more baseball in a day than some of these teams nowadays thinks of in a month. I ain't tryin' to boost the old-timers none, but I'll leave it to any one who ever played with or against that old San Antone team if it ain't true.

It sure was some ball club. Nine three-hundred hitters on the field when Ryan was catchin' and Black Bill pitchin' and two or three others on the bench; and five of us was clean-up hitters and fence busters. Say, I don't think that team could have played in any State exceptin' Texas and not had to ask for requisition papers to get the ball back. The papers used to say our middle name was Hit, and they printed it Billy Hit Grossman, and Pop Hit Pence, and Jimmy Hit McGuire, which was me, and so on.

As I said, I was signed to play second, but when we started out to train that spring, Jack's arm was so bum it took him two throws to heave 'em acrost from short, so he asked me to switch positions, and shorten up his throw. Not that it made any difference to me. We weren't as particular about where we played in those days as they are now. A ball player was a ball player, and he was supposed to play any place they stuck him. Why, I remember one spring Jack Grim was managin' Waco, and all he did was to hire fourteen ball players and sort 'em out to the positions he wanted to fill; and he run second, and would have copped the pennant if he hadn't got mixed up in a train wreck.

But I'm tellin' you about how Jack Davies win that pennant. They sure was crazy about baseball down in San Antone in them days—all over Texas, for that matter. We had run third the season before, and let both Dallas and Waco beat us out, so Terhune had loaded up with talent, to grab the flag. It looked as if we were too strong for the league, and would win all the games on the schedule if rain didn't keep us from playing some of them.

We had the class of the pitchers, and, as soon as the other managers looked over our line-up they commenced givin' orders to have the fences moved back forty rods so as to save balls.

All those fellows around the circuit that hung up signs offering twenty-five dollars for any one hittin' 'em with batted balls, put on one of them P. S.'s sayin': "This don't go for San Antone." It seemed a shame to take the money, and we was countin' on winnin' about fifty-eight straights, and then hirin' a lot of messenger boys to play for us till the other teams got caught up clost enough to make it interestin'.

We trains out at the Springs for ten days. It wasn't really any use for us to train a-tall, so we just loafs around in the shade most of the day and indulges in battin' practice. The pitchers gets so used to hearing line drives go past their ears they ducks their heads every time any one whistles. We practices hittin' a couple of hours every afternoon, then spends the rest of the time layin' round, loafin', and wishin' the season was over, so we could go huntin'.

We opens the season against Houston, and gets trimmed, eleven to six, but no one thinks anything of it. Such things will happen, so we counts up our base hits, and laughs over it. The next day they licks us again, seven to four, and we begins to get sore. That Houston team was a joke, anyhow; just a bunch of pretty fair kids, but not in our class. It rains the next day, and we

sits around, cussin' the luck, and polishin' up the bats, wishin' we could get at them Houston fellows. The next day we doubles up, and they beats us, eight to five and nine to four.

Say, by that time we *were* sore. The newspapers starts pannin' us, and askin' sarcastic questions. Some one calls us the False Alarms, and wants to know who said we could hit, and where our pitchers is hidin'. Our pitchin' had been pretty bad, but then no one pitches much that early in the season, but they had been outhittin' us in every game, and only one or two of us is even clost to the three-hundred mark, and old Jack is hittin' mostly ciphers. At that, he'd been taggin' that ball right where Spalding writes his name, but he couldn't hit 'em any place no one was.

They made a lot of fun of us for lettin' Houston clean up on the series that way, and we scrapes and polishes the old war clubs, and lays for a chance to get even when Waco comes, which was next. It ain't no use goin' into details; Waco just wades in and wallops us four straights: Six to five, five to two, four to three, and seven to one. When that series ends, we're ashamed to look at our battin' averages. We was afraid some of them big-league scouts lookin' over our percentages would think we was all pitchers.

Every one was sore, and wonderin' what was the matter, cussin' the luck, and changin' bats. I tell you, losin' eight straight games on the home grounds ain't no cause for joy any time, but when it happens that a team that looks like a cinch pennant winner loses the first eight of the season to dub clubs, people commence to think something is wrong somewhere. We was glad enough to get out of town.

On the way up to Galveston, we all jollies ourselves, and tells each other the streak is broken, now that we're off the home grounds, and that we'll start hittin', and send a few infielders to the amputation ward. But after the Gulls cleans up three straights on us, we quits jokin', and commences to wonder what sort of salaries they pays in the Cotton States League. Dallas and Houston is layin' for us, and they licks us in straight heats. Up to Dallas I strikes out three times against nothin'—honest, all that fellow had to do was to lob 'em up, and I'd miss 'em a foot. They had us goin'—and hangin' to the ropes.

Every one knowed there was a hoodoo loose somewhere, and we was watchin' each other for symptoms. If we'd have been up in New England, we'd have burned some one as a witch, sure.

We commences to throw away good, old, seasoned bats and hunt new ones with three worm holes in 'em, and to quarrel among ourselves; every one wantin' to shove the blame onto some one else.

Our pitchers had settled down pretty well, and was holdin' the other teams to low scores, but we had just quit hittin'. We couldn't have hit a baby carriage with an automobile. Think of that! A team with eleven natural three-hundred hitters, and not a man hittin' over two hundred and eighty-six, and I am only that high on a few lucky ones. We'd even quit cussin' the official scorers, which is a bad sign. I don't think we could have taken a score blank and marked a base hit on it.

Old Jack is worst of all. He was always gettin' his battin' average mixed up with the size of his collars, and then kickin' when he tried to get on a fifteen and one-half instead of an eighteen.

By the time Dallas has licked us the third straight time, every one in the club is eyin' Jack and tryin' to stick the blame on him. The newspapers begins sayin' Jack has been dead six or seven years, and askin' the management to notify the coroner.

I quit readin' the papers at all in them days. There was too much truth in

what them fellows was writin' about us. I don't mind hearin', in the clubhouse, how bad I am, but it sounds much worse when it gets into type. I remember oncet tellin' a reporter what a bum game I had played, and he wrote just what I said about myself, and when I read it the next mornin' I wanted to hunt him up and lick him for sayin' it.

Well, sir, we gets back home, havin' lost nineteen straights, and cussin' the conductor because he went slow up at Figerea Street crossin' and let us drop off there. There wasn't any brass band down to the depot to meet us. We gets out of our car quiet and easy, not tellin' any one we is the San Antone baseball club—not a-tall. We scatters quick for the back streets. Every time I passes a couple of guys on the street they looks at me as if ready to pull their guns, and says: "There's one of 'em, now!" and I feels like runnin'. Them Texas fans is touchy, and they sure don't care much for a loser.

Terhune is gettin' grayer and balder every minute. He has tried changin' the battin' order, and in Dallas he's turned it upside down, and let the pitcher lead off, but he can't break that hoodoo no way. So he orders us out for mornin' practice the day after we gets in.

That was the crabbiest bunch of athletes I ever did see together. We gets out there in the mornin' and knocks all the knots out of the fences with line drives against any kind of pitchin', and in the afternoon we can't hit a ticket scalper on Broadway. Honest, we swings our heads off at floaters so slow a fellow can see the ball all the way up, and count the stitches on it, and untie the knot on the seam while the ball is going past.

We gets trimmed again, of course, and shut out with two hits, and one paper starts a contest offerin' a reward to any one who will discover how our team happens to get them. Most of us decides to stick inside the park and practice after the game is over. At least, that is what we tells each other, but there is a lot of fans hangin' round outside the fence, and we don't want to go out till it gets dark. There's no tellin' what them Texas fans will do to a fellow when they get some crazy idea into their beans.

Terhune didn't say a word. He's all cussed out, and ain't got a cuss left for any one, no matter what happens. He don't know what to do, and all he can think of is mornin' practice, so he orders us out early the next day.

We was all sittin' round in the clubhouse, growlin', and cussin' each other, and each one alibyin' himself, and blamin' some one else, when Jack Davies comes in. He looked happy, which makes us sorer than ever, until he gets in the middle of the floor and says:

"Fellows, I've got a plan to break this hoodoo. You all stick here, while I fix it. I think I can arrange to start us all hittin' again."

We don't believe him, of course, but anything that sounds like base hits interests us just then, so we asks him how he's goin' to do it.

"I ain't sure I can pull it off, boys," he says, seriouslike. "But if I can we'll murder a few pitchers. I'm goin' to try. You stick here. If it works——"

He won't say anything more, but he has got us goin'. We watches him clost while he goes out to the mower shed and gets a wheelbarrow, and then takes every bat in the clubhouse and piles it on the barrow and starts wheelin' 'em away.

"I'll bring 'em all back inside an hour," he says. "Then we'll see if it works."

Jack wheels the bats out the carriage gate, and we sits around on the clubhouse porch wonderin' what sort of an idiotic scheme he's got in that old bald bean of his. Every one tries guessin' some sort of a thing, but no one has any

idea what Jack's up to. He sure has us interested. Olson bets Pop Pence four bits Jack has a patent spring to stick in the bats, and make 'em hit. The rest of us gives it up. Maybe his scheme ain't worth a nickel; but, like a fellow with neuralgia, we was perfectly willin' to try anything any one had to suggest.

About an hour later, Jack comes joggin' into the ball orchard shovin' that wheelbarrow load of timber as fast as he can, and yellin' like a Comanche. We jumps out quick to meet him; even them that has been sayin' Jack couldn't do nothin'.

"It's all right, fellows!" Jack yells. "Here's where we start at 'em! Look out for us to-day! We'll cripple a few infielders."

We all gets excited, and grabs our bats out of the pile, to see what he's done with 'em. Pop Pence feels all over Señorita, which is his pet bat, and can't see no difference in it, so he asks Jack what the scheme is.

"Just try her out against Lefty's fast curve, Pop," says Jack. "You'll see if she ain't crammed full of base hits. It's all fixed."

You see, we all knows that Pop is weak hittin' against a left-hander's fast curve, and if he can hit Lefty's hook, that's proof enough. Lefty loosens up a bit, and hooks a fast one over the outside corner, just where Pop don't like 'em a-tall.

And Pop he just snaps that bat, and cracks the ball on the nose, drivin' it like a shot to left field.

He comes back from the plate lookin' all over Señorita, and huntin' for something he can't see. The rest of us gets excited, and almost fights for a chance to crack at that ball. Such hittin' you never did see. We was knockin' infielders down with that ball, and drivin' 'em back onto the grass to get their hands on it a-tall.

We bats for an hour, and you never did see such a changed bunch of ball tossers. Every one is happy, and we keeps beggin' Jack to tell us what he done to them bats to make 'em hit that way. He won't tell us. Just keeps us guessin' and frettin' till we gets into the clubhouse. Then he makes us promise we won't tell any one a-tall what he's done, and, after we promises, he says:

"I just took 'em down and had Doc Schwenker put faith in 'em."

"What?" we yells. "Did you get him to do it?"

"Sure," says Jack. "I slips him a ten-spot, and he done it for me in a minute. Guess it was worth the money."

You needn't think we'd let Jack stand the expense, after him gettin' the idea. We takes up a collection, and gets fourteen dollars, tellin' Jack he can keep the extra four for wheelin' the bats.

You see, this Doc Schwenker is one of them faith healers. He's been preachin' and teachin' around San Antone for a month, claimin' he can cure all sorts of things by faith, and he's got us all guessin'. We'd been arguin' in the clubhouse about him all spring. Lots of folks in San Antone says he's a fake, and lots of 'em swears by him, and the papers is full every day of what he's doin'. We all gets excited again, and tells Jack what a great head he's got on him, and every one was wonderin' why *he* hadn't thought of takin' the bats down to Schwenker.

Micky Ryan, who is superstitious, is scared to death of his bats. He says he don't like any of that evil-eye dope in his clubs, but we tells him it's good dope, and there ain't no danger. He finally says he'll take a chance, and use 'em, but I notices he shuts 'em in his locker and won't touch 'em any more than he has to.

I wisht you could have seen the game that afternoon. We gets thirty-eight hits, with a total of fifty-one bases, and wins, thirty-four to two. The next mornin' the papers is full of how we've

found our battin' eyes at last, all in a bunch. We all keeps quiet about Schwenker and the bats, so's not to let any of the other clubs get wise. From that on we just wades through that league.

We lose a game up to Austin along in May, by accident, I guess; but by the middle of June we was out a mile in the lead, and slammin' the ball all over Texas. We looks down on any one who ain't got a battin' average of three hundred and fifty; all exceptin' old Jack. Seems as if his own dope didn't take the hoodoo off Jack's hittin'. He was pluggin' along, battin' about two hundred and forty, with the crowd roastin' him, and yellin' to Terhune to can him, but we stands by him for what he'd done for us.

Well, sir, along in August we has the pennant win so far nobody has a chance to finish second or third to us, and we just loafs along, wishin' it was over, and only playin' to sweeten up our battin' averages. I was roomin' with Jack over at Galveston, and one day I gets notice I've been sold to the big league, to report right away. I was feelin' pretty good when Jack comes up to bed, and was tellin' him about my luck in gettin' bought by a strong team, with a manager that would give a new fellow a chance to make good, and I says to him:

"Jack, do you think that faith dope the doc put in them bats will last in the big league?"

He was just gettin' into bed, and he rolls over and laughs.

"Say," he says, after a while, "you didn't fall for it, too?"

"Fall for what?" I asks. "Ain't it on the square?"

"Naw!" he says, laughing. "Schwenker never see them bats. I knowed you fellows has to get your confidence back before you can start hittin', so I wheels them bats around to Maloney's barroom and drinks a few beers while waitin' for you to get interested."

Now, as I said, maybe there is and maybe there ain't nothing in that faith-cure dope, but, believe me, I wish Jack hadn't told me. I'd have hit three hundred and forty in the majors that next season, instead of two hundred and ninety-six—and at that the official scorer beat me out of four clean hits, just because he had it in for me.

Other stories of baseball by Hugh S. Fullerton will appear in later issues of the POPULAR.

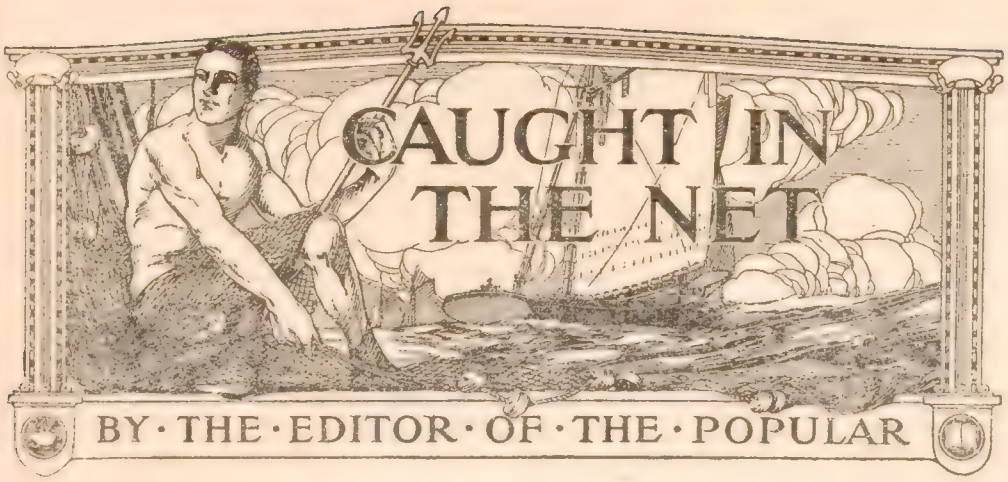
WHAT AILED THE SENATE

AN old colored man from Virginia had received at last the position that fulfilled his ambitions. He held the job of sweeping the steps on the east side of the Senate end of the capitol. Finding himself in this prominent place, he set about mastering the legislative and parliamentary phrases that are batted about so freely in the senatorial presence.

One day a party of tourists were disappointed when they found, upon arriving at the capitol, that the Senate was not in session.

"I wonder what's the matter with the senators to-day," said a woman in the party to old John.

"I ain't sartin," he replied judicially, "but I spec's dey done took an abscess."



THE MAKERS OF JEWELS

WHEN you open the door of most factories, there is a roar of sound like wind blown into the face. But with the patient artificers of jewels, when you open the door of their workshop, you enter a well of peace. It is more like the library of an ancient scholarly order than one more of the factories of tumultuous industry, where a workman never sees results, but only pulls a lever two thousand times a day. You would hardly know these men were moving, so minute is the area within which they operate. The great six-foot stone setter is focusing on a pin point of space, inserting a sapphire in a ring. There is no clatter of pistons and wheeze of belting. The work is even, silent, an eight-hour stretch of concentration; a set of experts bending over something held by tweezers between thumb and forefinger, like a student poised over a Greek particle. And the only moment when visible might extends itself is when in certain patterns the metal is ready to accept its design. Resting in its die, the iron weight crushes down upon it with the force of a seven-ton blow. The reason of this hush and steadiness is plain. Hand work is the price of the costly product. The worker is an artist, taking a full measure of time over the detail, seeing what he makes from start to finish, with pride in the honest workmanship.

And the words of Pater float back into memory as he describes the heavenly craftsman "with a cunning of hand which left his work so much the richer by the weight of gold it had lost under his tool." "Wonderful indeed was the craftsman, divine or half divine, who by the subtlety of his art had breathed so wild a soul into the silver."

Down through the long rooms the men sit at the wide west windows, fashioning ornaments. In a side room, the women are polishing the gold and platinum with a small rapidly revolving wheel of pigs' bristles. The little blue gas jets are burning against the black background of the tin windshield. The hot fire for melting burns steadily. Certain workmen are chasing a design of flowers on gold bracelets with a fine steel point. Others are building rings of gems and brooches from blue and white and red designs etched on paper. The stones are gently sunk in wax in the exact pattern of the perfected ornament, till they are lifted over into the tiny, curling fingers of the receiving metal. One man is busy on

a banquet ring of platinum, an inch and a half long—so bulky that it unfits the hand for work, and is worn only for great occasions of show. Another worker, a Hebrew boy, is mounting pink coral cameos, bearing the face of a chilly goddess in profile. The work is personal, and at Christmas season is all on order, each piece specially done for a particular person. As you bend over the shoulder of the workman, and see him aimed at his trinket, his eye and hand intent on the tiny, glowing bit, you can see in the shadowy background the grand dame in her mansion for whom the work is done. This is no roomful of anxiously driven unskilled labor. The faces of these men are full of specialized intelligence. Their fingers are swift. Their pay runs a thousand a year and over. The women earn eighteen and twenty dollars a week. A fortune lies under their fingers; the room is sprinkled with little twinkling pieces of value.

The boss himself is in his clean white apron, testing the products of the shop. Must a few more strokes be put on the bangle? Can a surer gleam be coaxed out of the platinum, already three times more costly than fine gold?

THE USES OF FEAR

GEORGE BOEHLER is a pitcher with the Detroit American League team. He is a man of speed and curves—and much wildness. In fact, there are many players who aver he is the only pitcher in the major leagues who has as much speed as Walter Johnson, the Washington wonder. Boehler is now receiving his second trial with Detroit, and in the spring of 1913, before being farmed out to the St. Joseph Club in the Western League, he earned much of his present reputation for lack of control.

Shortly after the beginning of the 1913 season Boehler was pitching for Detroit against the Cleveland Club, and in Cleveland. The Naps had piled up a tidy lead, and Boehler, being nervous, was even more wild than usual.

First he hit Cy Falkenberg, Cleveland's lean and lengthy pitcher, on the arm. Then Terry Turner got in the path of one of the shoots. Unsatisfied, apparently, Boehler soon afterward shot a straight, fast one right at Joe Jackson's head. The ball struck the Southerner a glancing blow, and actually carried away a tuft of hair.

From the bench, Manager Joe Birmingham saw the narrow escape of his brightest star, and when the inning was over he addressed some quite uncomplimentary remarks to the young pitcher.

Angered, Boehler snapped back, and then in defiance shouted to Birmingham that he would "get his" the next inning.

It so happened that Larry Lajoie preceded Birmingham at bat in the following inning, and on the first pitch Boehler caught the big Frenchman in the ribs with a pitch that caused a great exhibition of the effects of pain.

By this time the crowd was in an uproar. All manner of insults were hurled at the Tiger, and when, right afterward, Birmingham stepped to the plate, Boehler was so frightened that he nearly wilted in the pitcher's box. Recovering, however, he gritted his teeth, and, putting every ounce of his strength behind three pitches, he succeeded in striking out the Cleveland manager on balls that cut the plate in rapid succession.

To this day it is doubtful if Birmingham is acquainted with the real cause of Boehler's sudden display of control.

At the same time, the Tiger bears the reputation of being the only pitcher who was ever frightened into gaining mastery of the ball.

GOOD HOTELS

ONE of the really great reforms of the United States has been inaugurated way down in Florida. That commonwealth has a hotel inspector, or "commissioner," as he is termed, whose business it is to investigate the condition of boarding houses and hotels, and make public his findings. Apparently he is doing his work well, and the newspapers, especially the *Times-Union,* of Jacksonville, are giving a good deal of space to his reports and to the discussion they have aroused.

The inspector does not leave the public in any doubt as to what he discovers. For example, in regard to a hotel in central Florida, he says:

"This little building needs cleaning up; kitchen dirty and filthty; notice given for a general cleaning up."

Of another at a resort point he writes:

"Dining-room floors and tables fairly clean; flies abundant; general condition fair only; toilet very bad."

Of other hotels where conditions were found to be all right his recommendations are as strong as are his criticisms of the bad ones.

The noteworthy fact in connection with the campaign is that the people have been aroused to a realization that the business of caring for the traveler is not a strictly private matter, but one of public concern. Strangers get their impressions of a town or city, in a large measure, from its hotels. When the hotels are bad, the town or city suffers in reputation and trade. When they are good, all the residents profit, directly or indirectly. Not only the town folk, but the railroads and other transportation companies are affected.

To the commercial travelers the Florida campaign is of deep interest. The army of traveling men who spend ten or eleven months of the year "on the road" have a drab time at best. When, in addition to the ordinary discomforts of travel, they are confronted with bad cooking, unclean hotels, and bad ventilation, it is a wonder so many of them stand the strain so long. The man whose stomach has been the battle ground for a thousand cooks is a marvel if he is not a dyspeptic.

Speed to the Florida idea. May it spread throughout the land!

LIGHT

WE are altering the look of the earth by our recent inventions. The quality of the light that leaps into bloom at night in home, and shop, and street is far different from that which illumined our fathers and their fathers. The color which it gives is a new thing in the world. The old-fashioned lights were gas lamp, kerosene lamp, and tallow candle of orange-yellow color, the yellow incandescent lamp, and the yellowish-white arc, yellowish-white sunlight, and the white diffused daylight.

Now illuminants of efficiency have been brought out, with decided color differences—the greenish-yellow of Welsbach gas lamp, bluish-green of mercury lamp, and orange-yellow of the flaming arc. These newer lights that are taking charge of our night world have a strange charm not possessed by the yellow

lights of diffused sunshine, lamp, and gas. We appear a strange folk in their glare, chalked out, a night race.

"Colors seen by candlelight look different far by day" sang the lesser of the Brownings. That is only partly true, for both shed yellow light. But complexions seen by sunlight look strangely changed under the vitreous pour of the mercury. Who knows but the modern lights will work an inner change and we shall dance to other tunes, and bask in an alter ego under the new anointing.

RAILROAD MANNERS

EDWIN GOULD, who owns a railroad in the Mississippi Valley, and has the distinction of being the only member of the Gould family to make a success in managing a railroad, is credited with the authorship of one of the best articles on courtesy ever written by a millionaire. It has been sent to all his employees.

Here it is:

"Courtesy is to be distinguished from mere civility. The latter won't do; it is short of the mark. Take the case of the nervous woman who wishes to know why the train is late. Don't tell her: 'Board's against us.' She won't understand that, and the chances are that your answer will leave her worried—imagining something is really wrong.

"Then there is the puffy passenger who rushes up to ascertain what time the nine-o'clock train leaves. Fine chance to show your wit, but—don't do it. The man is excited. He doesn't realize how he has put the question. Give him the information he obviously wants—tell him his train is due to leave in three minutes, or five, or ten, as the case may be.

"Arbitrary Federal and State legislation is, of course, the greatest drawback and hindrance with which the railroad must contend. But we don't overshoot the mark when we name lack of courtesy on the part of employees as next in line. Therefore we urge every employee to improve his bearing toward our patrons and neighbors. It means dollars to us—preferment to you.

"In their application, the advantages of courtesy work both ways.

"No man is too big to be courteous—many are too small."

THE SPIRIT OF EVIL

WE see the world without at odds. We see disaster invading the innocent household, humiliation shaming the simplest of men, a furtive malevolence wreaking itself upon sweet and lovely things. To behold a noble mind stricken with insanity, to hear those whom we love spoken of with treachery, to know of kindliness and good will betrayed and laid low—these, the experiences of every mortal man, contain elements of intolerable injustice. We are driven to think that, hidden somewhere behind the clouds, or in the recesses of the darkest night, there is perhaps one lurking who overlooks the earthly life with a rich, though secret, scorn. How he must sometimes tumble in mirth, as he devises and aims one more of his petty but effective humiliations, and sees it reach its perfect consummation. More and more one is tempted in certain moods to suspect intention, a cleverly disguised purpose running through the ages, and reaching and tripping the individual life.

"Home is the Sailor, Home From the Sea"

By Clarence L. Cullen

Author of "The Sanguine Sleuth," "The Policeman and the Baby," Etc.

The master-at-arms, for good and sufficient reasons declining his pay check, determines to beat his way home penniless from Honolulu to New Jersey

JIM KENYON, chief master-at-arms of the cruiser *Ogden*, appeared at the door of the paymaster's office, and filled it. There was six foot three of Jim, and his shoulders were wider than the door. This is by way of saying that he was, as he looked, a proper handler of obstreperous men-o'-war's men.

"Well, Kenyon?" said the paymaster, an officer with a friendly eye.

"My cruise is up to-morrow, sir," said the master-at-arms, touching the peak of his white cap.

"So I see—my yeoman made a note of it on my pad," said the paymaster. "Well, of course, you're going to ship over, Kenyon?"

"Not on this station, sir," replied Jim. "I'm sick of the Pacific. Twelve years is enough. Three cruises on the China side, and another cruise wallowing up and down the west coast from the Aleutians to Callao—no more of the Pacific for me, sir; not for a while, anyhow."

"Can't say that I blame you, my man," said the paymaster, rubbing his nose. "I'd like a taste of the fleshpots of the Atlantic, and the condiment jars of the Mediterranean, myself. Well, then, if you're not going to ship over, you'll be waiting a few weeks for the *Ogden* to up anchor for San Francisco, and go up on board of us as an idler?"

"Not that, sir," said the master-at-arms. "I'm going to waive transportation, and go up on board the *Mariposa* to-morrow."

"You're for the luxuries of life, I see," said the paymaster, his Vandyke crinkling. "Going first cabin on the *Mariposa,* I suppose?"

"You'll be a better judge of that, sir," soberly replied Jim, "when I tell you that I'm not going to take a cent of my money from your books."

"But, man, you've got fourteen hundred dollars on my books," said the paymaster, staring.

"I know that, sir—I've been keeping track of it. And on the books it's going to stay—every yen of it." Kenyon spoke earnestly.

"Oh, I see," said the paymaster, smiling. "You've been beating that surreptitious poker game up for'ard under the to'gallant fo'c'sle, and so you've private means of your own."

"Never have beat that game once in all my eighteen years' service, sir, and I haven't got a dime about me," was the master-at-arm's offhand answer to that.

"Come, out with it, man," said the puzzled-looking paymaster. "How the devil are you going to get a ride on the *Mariposa* from Honolulu to San Francisco if you don't take any of your money from my books, and if you haven't got any money about you?" He flashed a penetrating gaze into the chief petty officer's eyes. "The Chinese mess

stewards haven't been teaching you how to smoke hop, have they, Kenyon?"

"Nothing like that, sir," replied the master-at-arms, grinning. "It's like this, sir: Three times I've tried, at the wind-up of cruises, to get home. Each time I had the money to make it. But not once did I get anywhere near home. Something always happened. Money is a head wind for me, sir. Now I'm going to make home without any money. It's the only way for me. If I start for home with money, I'll never get there."

" 'Drink and the devil'—that it, Kenyon?"

"Well, sir, something along of that pair—with trimmings."

"It's a crazy performance you're undertaking, my man," said the paymaster, reflective, "but, your time being up, you're the doctor. What do you want me to do with this money of yours on my books?"

"I'm asking you, sir, to transfer it to the books of the paymaster of the receiving ship at the League Island yard," said the master-at-arms. "I'll fetch up at Philadelphia in about a month and draw it."

"I'll do that, of course," said the paymaster. "But, after being shipmates with you for two cruises, I did think you were a man of sense." He shook his head sadly. The master-at-arms grinned unabashedly, touched his cap, and went forward.

Shortly after pipe-down that night a group of chief petty officers, all of them sage, salt-pickled oldsters in the service, stood smoking at the port gangway. The beauty of the night held them in a spell of silence. The stealthily whispering waters of the coral-hemmed harbor lapped the sides of the *Ogden* as she drowsed at her anchors. It was the chief master-at-arms who dispelled the ruminativeness of the smokers.

Kenyon pushed back his cap, scratched his forehead, cocked an eye at the low-hanging mosaic of stars, and remarked, as if to himself:

"The old ones will be getting on in years. I'm going home to see them before the wagon with the black plumes backs up to their door."

Jim's messmates laughed quietly. The laugh was not for the filial sentiment—for on land or sea there are no beings so drenched with such sentiment as men-o'-war's men. It was for Kenyon's announcement that he was going home. They knew his record as a homegoer. Jim's starts for home, they remembered, virtually synchronized with the finishes of those pious pilgrimages.

"If home for you meant the Barbary Coast of San Francisco, you'd make it all right, Jim," said the chief bo'sn's mate. "But—where did you say the place was?"

"Burlington, New Jersey," soberly replied Jim.

"Yes, I remember now—Burlington, New Jersey," chuckled the chief bo'sn's mate. "Well, man, your record's agin' you. You've got as much chance of making Burlington, New Jersey, as I have of getting around the Horn in a scuttle butt."

Kenyon bit into the stem of his pipe until his jaws looked pretty square in the starlight.

"All right," he said. "This is Honolulu, and the date is October the tenth. On November the tenth I'll mail to every swab in this bunch a picture postal card from Burlington, New Jersey, and every card will have my fist-of-the-pen on it."

They advised him to go below and tell that to the slumbering sea soldiers. Then they dispersed, making for their hammocks.

The chief master-at-arms lay awake for most of the night, the home hunger strong upon him. For twelve years he had not written home nor had word from home. But that was all right. The old ones always had been hearty.

They would be glad to see him now that he was a brass-buttoned man in the sea service. He remembered that his father had looked rather askance at his bluejacket uniform when, fifteen years before, he had first reached home in that rig, and that his younger brother had openly sneered at the uniform. But bygones were bygones. Kenyon was a man of forty. He had worked and battled his way to the rate he held. Now he wanted to see the old ones "before the wagon with the black plumes——" He fell asleep a little before dawn, to dream of myriads of black plumes blown by the wind.

At noon that day, with the good will of all hands aft and the cheers of all hands forward, the chief master-at-arms went over the *Ogden's* side for the last time. The paymaster's yeoman had spread the word over the ship that Jim was leaving all of his money on the ship's books. His shipmates knew that he was leaving the *Ogden* without a cent. They raked him with questions about that, but he kept his tongue back of his teeth.

At three o'clock that afternoon the steamer *Mariposa* was slipping past Diamond Head with a bone in her teeth, primed to make San Francisco in five days. Jim Kenyon was snugly stowed away on board the liner.

II.

Kenyon was not a man to make a shirking cruise on board of any kind of a ship. Some former navy shipmates, now of the *Mariposa's* crew, had stowed him away on the steamer. They could and would have kept him under cover and fed him throughout the run. He set his foot on that idea as soon as the islands had backed into the horizon astern by appearing on deck before the third officer; a trig, slightly overwise sea youngster. The third officer's youthful brow wrinkled as he stared at the big, sea-bronzed man looming above him.

"Hello—what's up now?" said he. "You're not on our articles. So you stowed away on us, did you?"

"I'll be working it out, sir," said Jim.

"There's enough of you to work the ship single-handed," said the third officer, and he took the stowaway to the skipper. The skipper, sprawled at ease in his cabin armchair, measured the huge, trimly planned proportions of the unsigned man.

"Well, he's not a lubber, like most of them—that's something," said the captain to the third officer. To Kenyon he said: "Man-o'-war's man, eh?" The men of the merchant service have their ways of spotting that breed.

"Yes, sir," replied Jim.

"Deserter?"

Kenyon flushed. "Not with an eighteen years' continuous-service certificate in my pocket, I hope, sir," said he.

"We'll have a look at that certificate," said the skipper, and Jim produced the paper, and passed it over. The captain glanced at it, and puckered his bearded lips for a whistle. "Chief master-at-arms, and discharged only to-day with honor," he wheezed, scratching back of his ear. "You were paid off, man, weren't you?" this with a searching look into the stowaway's face.

"I left fourteen hundred dollars on my ship's books, sir," said Jim. "I didn't want the money. I'm making for home to see the old ones. I'd never get there if I had the money on me."

"Now, for a change, we have a crazy man for a stowaway," said the skipper, turning to the third officer. "He tells me that the way to get home is to leave fourteen hundred dollars on a paymaster's ledger, and to go moneyless. The lunatic stows away on my ship to test his theory. The sea is the place to learn new things."

Seeing that the skipper spoke more

whimsically than unkindly, Kenyon cleared up the odd-looking point.

At the end of his last three cruises he had been paid off in San Francisco, each time with an average of a thousand dollars in savings. Every pay day had found him keen for a swift trip home to see the old ones, and, that visit made, for reshipping on the Atlantic side.

Nine years before, in San Francisco, with his thousand dollars in his pocket, he had started for the Oakland ferry to take the train for the East. He had for companion the chief carpenter's mate of his last ship, a Swede, who, also with a thousand dollars, was for a visit to his home in Sweden. The pair had some drinks on the way to the ferry. The drinks caused them to conclude simultaneously that a paltry thousand dollars was not enough money for the purpose each had in hand. So they flipped a coin for each other's thousand dollars—which, of course, was equivalent to flipping to see which of them should get the trip home. The Swede won and went his way clucking happily with two thousand dollars in his pouch. Kenyon, penniless, returned to his ship and shipped for another three-year cruise.

Six years before, with twelve hundred dollars for a pay-off, Kenyon had got as near his New Jersey home as Mohave, in southern California. At Mohave he had dropped off the train to refresh himself. One of the Mohave saloons had a faro-bank attachment. Jim managed to make his way back to the Mare Island navy yard, where he reshipped at his rate.

Three years before, at the wind-up of his last cruise, with eight hundred dollars and the same old hankering to make home, he had got no nearer New Jersey than Al White's house of call for men-o'-war's men on the San Francisco water front. Somebody else had possession of his eight hundred when he came to after a phantasmagoric night at White's, and the breadth of a continent still stretched between him and home.

"So I've worked it out, sir," concluded Jim, "that my only chance to make the other seaboard is to start broke and to stay broke till I get there. And it's time I made home. The old ones are getting on."

"It never occurred to you to control yourself, I suppose," said the skipper, who had listened with his chin in his hand to this characteristic story of a homing sailorman always baffled by appetite.

"It's in my mind pretty strong this time, sir," said Jim. "I'm going through with it. Of course, I'd never face the old ones without a clear eye in my head. And it's not that liquor can't be had, even by a man that's broke. There's liquor everywhere."

The skipper suddenly leaned forward in his armchair.

"You have that right, my man," he said, with emphasis. "There's smuggled liquor on board my ship. My crew below is cut in half by it, and we're not getting the steam. The chief engineer is just after telling me that fifty men of the black gang, firemen and coal heavers, are rolling drunk on watch. I can't clap the sots into arms. We've got to have what steam they give us. My master-at-arms is sick in bed. There's no finding the liquor that's making the gang below drunk." The skipper paused and surveyed Kenyon keenly. "Well, there's a job for a seasoned master-at-arms that wants to work out a stowaway's passage," he concluded.

"I'm under your orders, sir, even if I'm not on your articles," said Jim.

"The articles don't matter when there's a thing to be done," said the skipper. "You'll do me a turn by going below and mingling with those devils at the fires and in the bunkers, and drill-

ing it out of them where they've got their liquor stowed."

The stowaway stood straight at that last remark. "Oh, if that's the work, sir——" he began, breaking off. "I'm a master-at-arms, but I never stood a watch as a ship's spy," he added quietly, the red appearing under the bronze of his cheeks.

"You're not being asked to do ship's police work over white men—these drunken beasts are Chinamen," said the skipper crisply, his dignity upon him.

That made a difference. Kenyon had once been cut to ribbons in a mêlée between his ship's company and an outnumbering horde of coolies at Shanghai.

"I didn't know you had a Chinese black gang, sir," he said. "I'll look for the liquor, seeing that they're not white men."

"And you'll find it," confidently pronounced the skipper as Kenyon left the cabin with the third officer.

"You'll be having your hands full with that slant-eyed gang of drunks," remarked the third officer, as he led Kenyon to the engine-room hatch. "Call yourself lucky if you ever see this deck again."

He went below to the engine room, Kenyon following, and told the worried-looking chief engineer that the skipper had designated the unsigned man, a man-o'-war master-at-arms, for the job of finding out where the drunken Chinamen had their liquor hidden. The chief scanned Jim from cap to shoes.

"Good specimen of a man," he said to the third officer, as if the man-o'-war's man had not been present. "They'll run him through the vitals with hot slice bars, which'll be a pity."

Jim, remembering his contusions at Shanghai, the light of conquest in his eye, and his cap on one ear, left the two officers and strode forward to the furnace room, involuntarily marching to the majestic music of the basso-humming engines. The white oilers at work in the maze of whirling machinery, oil cans held at rest, watched him curiously as he paused at the furnace-room door to take in the picture.

Of the thirty Chinamen who should have been working out their watch at the fires, more than a dozen were stretched out, dead drunk, under ventilators and wind sails. Others were huddled under the main ventilator, each of them with shovel or slice bar at rest in one hand and a bottle in the other. A few comparatively sober ones were getting coal under the boilers. They were all naked to the waist, brawny men from the northern provinces of China. The drunken Chinaman is sometimes sullen and vicious, seldom merry.

Kenyon, pausing at the furnace-room break, picked out with his eye the most powerful of the Chinese firemen and apparently the most sober. This man was standing under the breeze of a small, flapping wind sail, drinking from an upturned bottle, his shovel at rest. He was almost of Jim's own stature, equally wide of shoulder, and Atlas-muscled.

Kenyon sauntered over to him, and knocked the bottle from his grasp. The Chinaman glared at him amazedly out of bloodshot, grime-rimmed eyes, and raised his shovel in the air. Kenyon stretched him flat with his fist, the shovel clattering to the grating. With sounds like the squeals of animals, all of the Chinamen who could keep their feet rushed at the man-o'-war's man. Kenyon, quick as a dancer on his feet, in spite of his inches and bulk, stepped nimbly back to the bulkhead, dividing the fire and engine rooms. He bent over and picked a huge slice bar from the grating. The angry squeals of the Chinese firemen had been heard in the bunkers, and drunken Chinese coal heavers began to pour out of bunker doors, blinking dazedly at the picture, redly illuminated by the furnace flare,

before joining the firemen's onrush toward Kenyon.

When the front rank of the rushers was within ten feet of him, the master-at-arms, raising the thick iron slice bar aloft with both hands, hurled the great furnace tool horizontally. It struck the four front-rank rushers at their middles as if it had been cast at them by a premature blast of dynamite. Those four sank to the grating. Kenyon stooped for another slice bar for close-quarter work. But when he stood erect again, he saw that he had no need to use the second tool. The rush was over. The squeals had ceased. The firemen and coal heavers, the menace gone from their eyes, had been whipped by one well-aimed slice bar flung from the catapult hands of a man who was unafraid.

Holding his slice bar as a pilgrim might clutch a staff, Kenyon walked over to where a group of the cowed firemen had huddled under a ventilator. He placed the palm of his loose hand back of the neck of the first one he came to, and yanked him from the bunch.

"You savvy rum all right," he said to this man. "Where is that rum?"

They all savvied rum, it appeared. Half a dozen of them pointed to a bilge compartment on the port side of the fire room. He motioned to them to break out that bilge. They did the job alertly, for the man-o'-war's man still was using the slice bar as a staff. Kenyon saw that the bilge was filled with dozens of unopened bottles of that hideous liquid libel on mescal which is known in the southerly waters of the Pacific as "swipes." Kenyon himself had swallowed a good deal of "swipes" in his time. Suddenly, right in the midst of the achievement of his task, a familiar, impish thought shot through his mind: How good some of that vile liquor would taste! The old hankering for alcohol, and the release and abandonment to follow, swooped upon him as he stared into the bilge. His nostrils dilated for the tantalizing aroma of it. His throat ached for a steady rill of it to be running back of his tonsils. But that fever passed quickly. He was on his way home—"and the old ones will be getting on."

He stowed two big galvanized iron buckets to their brims with the bottles of smuggled liquor, and, a bucket in each hand, he walked aft to the engine-room ladder. The watching oilers, crouched in the machinery, took their short pipes from between their teeth, and said "Good work" as he passed by. They had seen the performance in the fireroom, and word of it was already over the ship. The chief engineer, the worry gone from his eyes, patted Jim on the shoulder as the man-o'-war's man started to ascend the engine-room ladder, but seemed too pleased—or something—to speak. The chief, too, had had a bird's-eye view of the slice bar sailing horizontally through the air. Jim walked through the open door of the skipper's cabin, placed on the deck thereof the two buckets overloaded with unopened bottles, and saluted man-o'-war style.

"This is all there is of the rum below, sir," he said. "They'll be making steam now."

The skipper, a man old and wise, and not devoid of love in his heart, stroked his beard, pushing up the ends of it, and looking downward as if for split hairs.

"You're a good deal of a man, Mr. Kenyon," said the captain, with a skipper's dignity. Jim experienced a thrill. Here was reward! No skipper—indeed, no officer—ever had given him the "Mr." handle before! "Your passage is well earned," went on the captain. "The third officer offers to share his cabin with you. You'll not do the turn of a hand again on my ship during the run."

He held out his hand. Jim gripped it, saluted, and went aft to find the third officer—who at that instant happened to be seated on the edge of the first officer's bunk, enthusiastically relating how a drunken Chinese black gang had been instantly subjugated by a stowaway master-at-arms with a slice bar. "And I'll be proud and glad to sleep with the beggar for the rest of the run up!" the boyish officer concluded, with an honest mist at his eyes.

So Kenyon, after all, made the run from Honolulu to San Francisco as an idler. When the steamer docked he was summoned to the skipper's cabin. The captain slipped a ten-dollar gold piece into the man-o'-war's man's hand.

"You'll be paying that back, I hope," said the old man, his eyes twinkling, "when you get your wealth off the paymaster's ledger. Well, man, you'll make home. You'd make it if your home was atop of the Himalayas. Good-by and good luck."

Kenyon found himself once more on the streets of San Francisco with money in his pocket wherewith to buy drink at least—if not enough money to keep him from making home!

III.

There are few cities in the world where the detached mariner, providing he have the desire, can remain so protractedly under the spell of alcohol on the basis of a ten-dollar gold piece as he can in San Francisco. The San Francisco steam beer, agreeably acrid to the stomach that doesn't shudder under its impact, quickly dulling to senses that long to be dulled, is dispensed in enormous goblets—one filled goblet a drink for a Gargantuan—for the piece of allowed silver called a nickel. Everywhere on that water front are bargain offerings of the still more swiftly acting fluids that cause the sailorman enjoying his shore fiesta to search for a hidden bale to stretch out upon—or to feel for his knife.

Jim Kenyon, adrift on this water front, his nerves clamoring, and his dry throat aching for such stimulation, and with money in his pocket wherewith to buy it, throttled the old imperious appetite, lodged in him by many years of periodical indulgence, as soon—and as often—as it besieged him. He came upon scores of his former shipmates, down from the Mare Island navy yard ships for a whirl, and with the bags hanging from their neck lanyards bulging with gold, who tried forcibly to drag him into their wild carnival.

He crossed to Oakland to avoid them. Oakland, moreover, was the difficult overland starting point of his adventure toward home. For six days he hung around a railroad station, waiting for a chance to "grab a head-end"—to start his long land ride, that is to say, on a blind baggage. That seemed the only way, and he was in the mood of the man who takes his medicine. He found that even this method was not feasible. It was a year of hard times in California. Dozens of men, many of them more than decently dressed, hovered around the lower end of the station waiting for the same chance. Many times a day they were routed from the station by the railway police. Jim watched the fine trains sweeping grandly out, filled with happy-eyed passengers. He would have liked to be one of those passengers bound East on a luxurious train. But never for a moment did he believe that it would be possible for him to be such a passenger with the savings of a cruise in his pocket. He knew later that he was mistaken as to this, as men often are mistaken who underestimate the power of their own will and permit that underestimation to possess them and guide their actions.

Darkness was falling on the evening of his sixth day of station-hovering when, on his way out of the station

yard to the fifteen-cent lodging house where he was putting in the nights, he saw a brilliantly illuminated private car being backed down a siding to the station. Jim swung on to the rear platform of this private car, which was moving slowly. He did not know who owned the car, where it was going, or whether, for the present, it was going anywhere. At any rate it would carry him back to the station, from which he had just been driven, and there might yet be a chance for him to make the blind baggage of a train that was to start for the East in half an hour.

He remained on the platform of the private car until he found that it was about to be attached to the rear of that through train. Then, vaulting over the brass rail to the station platform, he found himself in the midst of a scene. A handsome, weak-faced man of thirty was being shrewishly chided by a sharp-featured, raucous-voiced lady of perhaps fifty.

Jim quickly made out from the talk, which was exclusively about some missing dogs, that this pair owned the private car. He took them for mother and son. The negro servants attached to the car stood about the platform, listening sardonically to the remarks of their lady mistress on the subject of the dogs. The dogs, it appeared, should have been there half an hour before. The sharp-featured lady severely blamed the weak-faced man for not having himself convoyed the dogs from San Francisco, where, it came out in the talk, they had been on exhibition at the San Francisco dog show, instead of leaving that job to a drunken dog attendant at the show who at that very moment probably was unable to take care of himself, much less of the dogs. The man took the lady's verbal drubbing without a word by way of reply. He had a whipped look.

The lady's voice was rising to match her wrath when deep-mouthed woofing was heard at the station gate. Four huge mastiffs, on one leash, bounded through the gate and along the station platform, pulling in their wake a foolish-looking young man so far gone in liquor that he could barely keep his feet to follow the tugging dogs.

"There they are, at last!" exclaimed the lady. "And, of course, the man is silly drunk, just as I told you he would be." She grabbed the leash from the dazed custodian of her dogs, while the huge animals yapped joyously around her. "Now what are we going to do for somebody to take care of my babies?" she went on querulously. "I wouldn't have that drunkard on my car for anything in the world, even if he does know a little about dogs."

Jim Kenyon, cap in hand, stepped up to the lady. "I'd be glad to go along with the dogs, ma'am," said he.

Her eye took in the man-o'-war's man's monolithic proportions.

"Well, you're big enough to go along with mastodons, let alone mastiffs," she said. "What do you know about dogs?"

"I was helper for a kennel master of hounds when a youngster back East, ma'am," replied Jim, and he told the truth. "Since then I've known dogs—well, everywhere."

"One of my babies—his name is Charlemagne—is a little peevish, and has to be watched," she said. The bloodshot-eyed brute, with a wicked muzzle, was alongside of her, and she patted his head. "He doesn't like strangers. He views strangers, I think, as articles of diet. We are going straight through to Chicago. Do you care to go that far?"

"I'm for the other ocean, ma'am," said Jim.

"Are you a drunkard?" she asked him sharply. She saw him stiffen slightly at the question, and, observing how wholesome the man's face was, she repeated the question more mildly: "I mean, do you drink?"

"No, ma'am," he answered.

He felt, with a certain strange glow of a new sort of pride, that he had already won the right to make that reply. He did not drink. He liked the thought of that. Something that he never had experienced before was beginning to make its appeal to the man-o'-war's man's imagination.

"I believe I'll take you along for the dogs," said the lady. "Wait till I speak to my husband," and she trotted to the other end of the car, where the handsome, weak-faced man stood conferring with the car servants. Her husband! Jim learned later that the unhappy gentleman, for a home and for greater easement, had married this elderly lady with a tongue in her head.

Fifteen minutes later the train pulled out. Jim was with the mastiffs in their compartment at the extreme end of the private car. The scripless man-o'-war's man, homeward bound, was by way of making more than two-thirds of his overland journey in a car fit for the railway journeying of a king.

Soon he found, however, that it was not to be all cakes and ale. His job was to feed the dogs under the eye of their lady mistress, to exercise them on station platforms at lay-overs of half an hour or more—and to prevent the animal by the name of Charlemagne from eating him alive. For the first two days out he sought to conciliate that evil brute. But conciliation was a word that did not appear in Charlemagne's lexicon. The ugly-tempered beast had to be exercised separately on the station platforms. His sailor custodian had to grip the brute's heavily studded collar with both of his powerful hands during the exercising periods, Charlemagne having formed the conviction from the start that Jim was merely something alive that was good to eat.

The man-o'-war's man took his meals in the kitchen of the car with the car servants, who made steady wassail there throughout the trip, to the end that there might be no champagne or other fluids left over, merely to be carted away at Chicago. Jim watched their steady drinking with brain and body throbbing with desire. The sight and smell of the liquor tugged at him like a swift tide hauling at the moorings of a ship. But he held on. Against the poignancy of desire, he began to match the profound satisfaction that comes from resisting and rejecting the debarred form of gratification.

The train was a hundred miles from Chicago. Jim, agreeably replete after eating his breakfast, stepped down the passageway from the kitchen to the dogs' compartment, and, whistling softly for company, opened the compartment door. There was a scraping sound as of paws tensely gathering for a spring—and Charlemagne, loose from his leash, came through the air at him like a bounding lion.

Jim caught the brute by the throat in mid-air, and threw him on his back. The dog's long, sharp-pointed claws, attached to huge paws that flailed madly, pierced the man-o'-war's man's clothing at every lash-out, tearing skin and flesh from his chest until the whole front of him was soaked in blood. But he had his great hands wound like a hoop of steel around the mastiff's neck. The dog pulled him around the floor of the car as if he had been a sack of bran. But never for an instant did Jim permit his grip on the brute's neck to relax. The other dogs barked and howled at their leashes while the battle went on. The man-o'-war's man did not call out, even when, at times, the strangling dog seemed in a fair way to work his neck loose from the hoop of hands.

While the issue still was in doubt, Jim saw the compartment door open a few inches. The husband of the lady mistress of the dogs watched the man-and-dog fight through the small opening. But he never offered to help the

man, who, for his life, kept his hands hooped about the brute's great neck, nor did Jim ask for any help, even when, at times, he felt the strength trickling from the ends of his fingers.

But the choked dog was losing strength, too, and, finally, after twenty minutes of this battling, with an effort that brought the blood throbbing at his temples like the impact of a great surf, the man-o'-war's man got the animal squarely on his back, pressed his knees deeply into the dog's midsection, and strangled him to a brightly merited death. Jim, too exhausted to rise, settled back on his haunches, struggling to get enough air into his lungs, poisoned by the brute's breath, to keep life in his body.

"Pretty sportin' scrap," commented the gentleman who had married for a home, entering the compartment and kicking the dead dog. "I'm glad you throttled that brute. But the madam will be furious. She's still in bed. You'd better close your ears to what she'll say to you when she sees that dead cur."

He went out and returned directly with a heavy silver flask filled with brandy, the top of which he was unscrewing as he reëntered the compartment. The fruity fragrance of the liquor leaped through Jim's nostrils to his brain, thrilling him with a frenzy of desire. He had to employ what little strength remained to him to keep his hands from reaching out for the flask.

"Here," said the husband of the lady with a home to give, "take a good long swig of this. You need it."

"I'm off the stuff," said Jim.

"Pshaw, man, you're pale as a spook, and shaking like a leaf," insisted the holder of the alluring flask. "Lost a bit of blood, too, by the looks of your front." Jim's coat and shirt were in ribbons. "A man who can choke a mastiff to death with his bare hands needs something to pull him together after that kind of a stunt. Drink a pint of this, man."

Jim refused, and the owner of the flask went out.

The train was within the city limits of Chicago when the lady cherisher of the dogs burst angrily into the compartment. Her husband had broken to her as gently as possible the news of the untimely but necessary taking off of Charlemagne.

"You ruffian, you reprobate, you scoundrel!" she stormed at Jim. "How dared you kill one of my babies? I'll have you arrested the instant the train stops in Chicago!"

He tried to tell her that it was the dog's life or his own, but she would not listen, and continued to scream at him until the train halted in the Chicago station. Jim left the car without the twenty dollars that had been promised him for caring for the dogs on the journey. But he was not thinking of that as he hurried out of the station, fearing that the angry woman might carry out her threat to have him arrested. He was thinking that here he was, less than a thousand miles from home, only a little more than half a month from Honolulu, and, as the log of liberty-returning men on men-o'-war has it, he still was "clean and sober"!

IV.

On a siding, under a Chicago train shed, was a sign painters' car. The sign painters, starting out from New York four months before, had been cheapening and defiling the landscape along railway tracks as far West as St. Louis with huge signboards proclaiming the virtues of a brand of tobacco. Now, their work done, they were bound East. Jim, hanging watchfully about this station, met the sign painters and forgathered with them. Their car was returning to New York by way of Philadelphia Jim rode with

them to Philadelphia. The sign painters were celebrating the end of their season's work with a debauch. On this last leg of his journey the drink, with which he could have filled himself to comatoseness by the reaching out of a hand, had a greatly diminished temptation for the master-at-arms. For one thing, he could see, being free from the gibbering spell that bound them, that the drink was making mere loathsome animals of his friends the painters, decent enough men when sober. For another, the man-o'-war's man, through the strength gained by the renunciations of his journey, was unconsciously making for the ranks of the self-conquered.

His fourteen hundred dollars was waiting for him when, early one morning, just three weeks from the day he had started from Honolulu, the master-at-arms presented himself before the paymaster on board the receiving ship at the League Island navy yard. This paymaster looked Jim over curiously, having had a private note from the paymaster of the *Ogden* about the master-at-arm's penniless pilgrimage from Hawaii to the Atlantic seaboard.

"I'll be writing to the *Ogden's* paymaster that you made it, Kenyon," he said. "He appears to have doubted that you could do the trick."

Jim spent the rest of the forenoon outfitting in Philadelphia.

He caught the two o'clock train for Burlington, New Jersey. It was a raw, gray day of rain. When the train, easing up for the station, passed by the old Burlington cemetery, with its deep-sunken graves and its ancient headstones defaced by time and weather, the image of the black plumes returned to his mind. He hoped he was not too late. The old ones always had been hearty!

When he stepped to the station platform, a very old hackman—he had been old even in Jim's boyhood, the man-o'-war's man remembered—greeted him, whip in hand, in the piping voice of the aged.

"Now here's Richard Kenyon's boy Jim back home—the boy that went to sea," he said. "It's a year or more ye've been away now, eh, Jim?"

"Twelve years, Jerry," said Jim. The old man, who had lost count of the years, blinked incredulously. Jim, tossing his suit case into the old man's dilapidated hack, climbed in himself. "It's good to ride inside, Jerry," he said, "instead of hitching on the back springs and being flicked off by your whip. Remember me doing that?" The old man grinned toothlessly, and turned his horse toward the back of the town, where Jim's home was.

"So ye're back to see your brother, thin?" said the old hackman.

Jim's heart pounded against his ribs.

"In a way, yes, Jerry," he replied huskily. "But, of course, the old ones come first."

The ancient jehu turned a pair of bleared, rheumy eyes upon the man-o'-war's man.

"The father and mother, ye mean?" he piped wonderingly, and paused. "Ye haven't heard, thin?" he added.

"Heard what?" asked Jim, suddenly cold and rigid in his seat. He held his breath for what he sensed was coming.

"The brother will tell ye," said Jerry, clucking to his old horse.

It was some time before Jim could ask the question:

"Are they both dead, Jerry?"

"Years ago," replied Jerry.

The master-at-arms leaned back in his seat and closed his eyes. For this he had fought his way over a quarter of the world!

The hack stopped in front of a house set back from a street on the edge of the poorer quarter of the town. It was a small, two-story house, with a decided and dangerous-looking list to starboard. The faded yellow paint was peeling

from the loose-hanging weatherboards. The little front yard was rank with weeds. Jim remembered when there had been an old-fashioned garden of flowers there.

The man-o'-war's man paid Jerry and dismissed him. Suit case in hand, he entered the open gate, which was hanging from its hinges. The half dozen rickety wooden steps creaked and bent ominously under his weight as he ascended them to make the front door. There was no response to his rap. He rapped again. No one answering, he pushed open the unlocked door.

"Ahoy, there—anybody about?" he called out, as he stepped into the dark, narrow little hall.

He caught the sound of thick mumbling coming from the living room at the end of the hall, and, the soul sickness of the past few minutes growing upon him, he walked back there.

Seated beside the table, which was covered by a dirty red tablecloth, was Jim's only living relative—that brother who, fifteen years before, had sneered at Jim's bluejacket uniform. The brother was now a man of thirty odd. On the table to his hand was a bottle of whisky, a smeared glass, and a pitcher of water. The man was unshorn, unshaven, of an almost obscene slovenliness of person. Although he was well over two parts drunk, a bleary light of recognition shone in his eyes when Jim, dropping his suit case, held out his hand. The brother, unable or unwilling to rise, took the hand flabbily.

"Oh, it's you, y' sailorizin' hobo, is it?" he muttered thickly. "All togged out, too. Must have money. Have a drink?"

The door leading from the living room to the kitchen opened, and a poor scrag of a prematurely old woman, wiping her sudsy, bony arms on a dirty gingham apron, entered. She was Jim's brother's wife. Jim remembered her as a pretty little girl with starchy short skirts and two braids down her back.

"How are you, Mary?" said Jim, holding out his hand.

She took the hand limply. She did not look surprised. The misery of her broken life burned in her weary, sunken eyes.

"Oh, it's you, Jim Kenyon?" she said. "How d'ye do? Well, you're a decent, clean-lookin' man, if you are a sailor. Isn't this the fine brother you have?" turning to the mumbling creature at the table. "Isn't he the sweet object?" She clattered across the room and shook a skinny fist in her husband's red, puffy face. "You miserable, drunken brute!" she screamed at him. "Me bending over a washtub for the likes of you—you that broke your mother's heart and sent her to her grave!"

The two quarreled hideously, until Jim, taking the worn, frenzied little woman by the shoulders, gently led her to the kitchen, and closed the door. She quieted down after a time, and told him about the death of his parents. Jim pressed a hundred-dollar bill into her eager, clawlike hand. Then he passed back to the living room, where his brother still sat huddled alongside the whisky, mumbling inarticulately to himself. Jim clapped him on the back by way of bidding him good-by. But he did not again offer his hand. He left then for the cemetery. He stood in the rain at the foot of the graves of his father and mother, resting side by side, and made the vow which swept him into the ranks of the self-conquered. Then he went back to the League Island receiving ship, and shipped over at his rate of chief master-at-arms.

The black plumes, fluttering too soon before the home door, had robbed him of the happiness of his home-coming. To that extent his pilgrimage had failed. But he himself had won.

M i s s i n g

By E. Phillips Oppenheim

Author of "The Lighted Way," "The Malefactor," Etc.

(*In Four Parts—Part Two*)

THE CHIEF CHARACTERS IN THIS STORY:

MILES FENTOLIN: one of the most curious mortals in the British empire; an invalid in body, with both legs amputated; a giant in mind; a despot ruling his household in deadly fear; from his electric wheel chair meddling in the affairs of nations, and possessing the secrets of the great world powers; a sort of Puck, a professional mischief maker.

GERALD FENTOLIN: his nephew.

ESTHER FENTOLIN: his niece.

LUCY PRICE: his secretary.

HENDERSON: the perfect butler.

JOHN P. DUNSTER: an American on a secret diplomatic mission to The Hague, who, meeting with an accident, is taken to Mr. Fentolin's home, and there kept prisoner after Fentolin finds in his pocket a document which he declares is "the most amazing message of modern times."

RICHARD HAMEL: son of an artist who was a friend of Mr. Fentolin's. Comes to take possession of "The Tower," left him by his father, and to try to get from Mr. Fentolin what he knows of a conference of some of the great powers at The Hague. He meets Esther, and she tells him not to allow her uncle to dissuade him from occupying the Tower, though it is now used by Mr. Fentolin for some mysterious purpose.

CHAPTER XI.

THE little station at which Hamel alighted was like an oasis in the middle of a flat stretch of sand and marsh. It consisted of a few raised planks only and a rude shelter—built, indeed, only for the convenience of St. David's Hall, for the nearest village was two miles away. The station master, on his return from escorting the young lady to her car, stared at this other passenger in some surprise.

"Which way to the sea?" Hamel asked.

The man pointed to the white gates of the crossing.

"You can take any of those paths you like, sir," he said. "If you want to get to Salthouse, though, you should have got out at the next station."

"This will do for me," Hamel replied cheerfully.

"Be careful of the dikes," the station master advised him. "Some of them are pretty deep."

Hamel nodded, and, passing through the white gates, made his way by a raised cattle track toward the sea. On either side of him flowed a narrow dike filled with fresh salt water. Beyond stretched the flat marshland, leavened with cracks in its mossy turf, and creeks of all widths, filled also with sea slime and sea water. A slight gray mist rested upon the more distant parts of the wilderness which he was crossing, a mist which seemed to be blown in from seaward in little puffs, resting for a time upon the earth, and then drifting upward and fading away like soap bubbles.

More than once where the dikes had overflown he was compelled to change his course, but he arrived at last at the little ridge of pebbled beach bordering

This story began in the May month-end POPULAR.

the sea. Straight ahead of him now was that strange-looking building toward which he had all the time been directing his footsteps.

As he approached it, his forehead slightly contracted. There was ample confirmation before him of the truth of his fellow passenger's words. The place, left to itself for so many years, without any attention from its actual owner, was neither deserted nor in ruins. Its solid graystone walls were sea-stained and a trifle worn, but the arched wooden doors leading into the lifeboat shelter, which occupied one side of the building, had been newly painted, and in the front the window was hung with a curtain, now closely drawn, of some dark red material. The lock from the door had been removed altogether, and in its place was the aperture for a Yale latchkey. The last note of modernity was supplied by the telephone wire attached to the roof of the lifeboat shelter.

He walked all round the building, seeking in vain for some other means of ingress. Then he stood for a few moments in front of the curtained window. He was a man of somewhat determined disposition, and he found himself vaguely irritated by the liberties which had been taken with his property. He hammered gently upon the framework with his fist, and the windows opened readily inward, pushing back the curtain with them. He drew himself up on the sill, and, squeezing himself through the opening, landed on his feet and looked around him, a little breathless.

He found himself in a simply furnished man's sitting room. An easel was standing close to the window. There were reams of drawing paper, and several unfinished sketches leaning against the wall. There was a small oak table in the middle of the room; an exquisite chiffonier against the wall, on which were some cut-glass decanters and goblets. There was a Turkey carpet upon the floor which matched the curtains, but, to his surprise, there was not a single chair of any sort to be seen. The walls had been distempered, and were hung with one or two engravings which, although he was no judge, he was quite sure were good.

He wandered into the back room, where he found a stove, a tea service upon a deal table, and several other cooking utensils, all spotlessly clean, and of the most expensive description. The walls here were plainly whitewashed, and the floor was of hard stone. He then tried the door on the left, which led into the larger portion of the building—the shed in which the lifeboat had once been kept. Not only was this door locked, but he saw at once that the lock was modern, and the door itself was secured with heavy iron clamps. He returned to the sitting room.

"The girl with the gray eyes was right enough," he remarked to himself. "Mr. Fentolin has been making himself very much at home with my property."

He withdrew the curtains, noticing, to his surprise, the heavy shutters which their folds had partly concealed. Then he made his way out along the passage to the front door, which he opened easily from the inside. Leaving it carefully ajar, he went out with the intention of making an examination of the outside of the place. Instead, however, he paused at the corner of the building with his face turned landward.

Exactly fronting him now, about three-quarters of a mile away, on the summit of that strange hill standing out like a gigantic rock in the wilderness, was St. David's Hall. He looked at it steadily and with increasing admiration. Its long, red brick front, with its masses of clustering chimneys, a little bare and weather-beaten, impressed him with a sense of dignity owing as much to the purity of its architecture as the singularity of its situation. Behind—a won-

derfully effective background—were the steep gardens from which, even in this uncertain light, he caught faint glimpses of coloring subdued from brilliancy only by the twilight. These were encircled by a red brick wall of great height, the whole of the southern portion of which was inclosed with glass.

From the fragment of rock upon which he had seated himself, to the raised stone terrace in front of the house, was an absolutely straight path, beautifully kept like an avenue, with white posts on either side, and built up to a considerable height above the broad tidal way which ran for some distance by its side. It had the appearance almost of a race track, and its state of preservation in the midst of the wilderness was little short of remarkable.

"This," Hamel said to himself, as he slowly produced a pipe from his pocket, and began to fill it with tobacco from a battered silver box, "is a queer fix. Looks rather like the inn for me!"

"And who might you be, gentleman?"

He turned abruptly around toward his unseen questioner. A woman was standing by the side of the rock upon which he was sitting, a woman from the village, apparently, who must have come with noiseless footsteps along the sandy way. She was dressed in rusty black, and in place of a hat she wore a black woolen scarf tied around her head and underneath her chin. Her face was lined, her hair of a deep brown plentifully besprinkled with gray. She had a curious habit of moving her lips, even when she was not speaking. She stood there smiling at him, but there was something about that smile, and about her look, which puzzled him.

"I am just a visitor," he replied. "Who are you?"

She shook her head.

"I saw you come out of the Tower," she said, speaking with a strong local accent, and yet with a certain unusual correctness, "in at the window and out of the door. You're a brave man."

"Why brave?" he asked.

She turned her head very slowly toward St. David's Hall. A gleam of sunshine had caught one of the windows, which shone like fire. She pointed toward it with her head.

"He's looking at you," she muttered. "He don't like strangers poking around here, that I can tell you."

"And who is he?" Hamel inquired.

"Squire Fentolin," she answered, dropping her voice a little. "He's a very kind-hearted gentleman, Squire Fentolin, but he don't like strangers hanging around."

"Well, I am not exactly a stranger, you see," Hamel remarked. "My father used to stay for months at a time in that little shanty there, and paint pictures. It's a good many years ago."

"I mind him," the woman said slowly. "His name was Hamel."

"I am his son," Hamel announced.

She pointed to the Hall.

"Does he know that you are here?"

Hamel shook his head.

"Not yet. I have been abroad so long."

She suddenly relapsed into her curious habit. Her lips moved. No words came. She had turned her head a little, and was facing the sea.

"Tell me," Hamel asked gently, "why do you come out here alone, so far from the village?"

She pointed with her finger to where the waves were breaking in a thin line of white, about fifty yards from the beach.

"It's the cemetery, that," she said, "the village cemetery, you know. I have three buried there—George, the eldest, James, the middle one, and David, the youngest. Three of them—that's why I come. I can't put flowers on their graves, but I can sit, and watch, and look through the sea, down among the

rocks where their bodies are, and wonder."

Hamel looked at her curiously. Her voice had grown lower and lower.

"It's what you land folks don't believe, perhaps," she went on, "but it's true. It's only us who live near the sea who understand it. I am not an ignorant body, either. I was schoolmistress here before I married David Cox. They thought I'd done wrong to marry a fisherman, but I bore him brave sons, and I lived the life a woman craves for. No, I am not ignorant. I have fancies, perhaps—the Lord be praised for them!—and I tell you it's true. You look at a spot in the sea and you see nothing—a gleam of blue, a fleck of white foam, one day; a gleam of green with a black line, another; and a gray little sob, the next, perhaps. But you go on looking. You look day by day and hour by hour, and the chasms of the sea will open, and their voices will come to you. Listen!"

She clutched his arm.

"Couldn't you hear that?" she half whispered. "'The light!'—it was David's voice! 'The light!'"

Hamel was speechless. The woman's face was suddenly strangely transformed. Her mood, however, swiftly changed. She turned once more toward the hall.

"You'll know him soon," she went on, "the kindest man in these parts, they say. It's not much that he gives away, but he's a kind heart. You see that great post at the entrance to the river there?" she went on, pointing to it. "He had that set up, and a lamp hung from there. Fentolin's Light, they call it. It was to save men's lives. It was burning, they say, the night I lost my lads. Fentolin's Light!"

"They were wrecked?" he asked her gently.

"Wrecked," she answered. "Bad steering it must have been. James would steer, and they say that he drank a bit. Bad steering! Yes, you'll meet Squire Fentolin before long. He's queer to look at—a small body, but a great, kind heart. A miserable life, his, but it will be made up to him. It will be made up to him!"

She turned away. Her lips were moving all the time. She walked about a dozen steps, and then she returned.

"You're Hamel's son, the painter," she said. "You'll be welcomed down here. He'll have you to stay at the Hall—a brave place. Don't let him be too kind to you. Sometimes kindness hurts."

She passed on, walking with a curious, shambling gait, and soon she disappeared on her way to the village. Hamel watched her for a moment, and then turned his head toward St. David's Hall. He felt somehow that her abrupt departure was due to something which she had seen in that direction. He rose to his feet. His instinct had been a true one.

CHAPTER XII.

From where Hamel stood a queer object came strangely into sight. Below the terrace of St. David's Hall—from a spot, in fact, at the base of the solid wall—it seemed as though a gate had been opened, and there came toward him what he at first took to be a tricycle. As it came nearer, it presented even a weirder appearance.

Mr. Fentolin, in black cape and black skullcap, sat a little forward in his electric carriage, with his hand upon the guiding lever. His head came scarcely above the back of the little vehicle, his hands and body were motionless. He seemed to be progressing without the slightest effort, personal or mechanical, as though he rode, indeed, in some ghostly vehicle. From the same place in the wall had issued, a moment or two later, a man upon a bicycle, who was also coming toward him.

Hamel was scarcely conscious of this secondary figure. His eyes were fixed upon the strange personage now rapidly approaching him. There was something which seemed scarcely human in that shrunken fragment of body, the pale face with its waving white hair, the strange expression with which he was being regarded. The little vehicle came to a standstill only a few feet away. Mr. Fentolin leaned forward. His features had lost their delicately benevolent aspect; his words were minatory.

"I am under the impression, sir," he said, "that I saw you with my glasses from the window, attempting to force an entrance into that building."

Hamel nodded.

"I not only tried but I succeeded," he remarked. "I got in through the window."

Mr. Fentolin's eyes glittered for a moment. Hamel, who had resumed his place upon the rock close at hand, had been mixed up during his lifetime in many wild escapades. Yet at that moment he had a sudden feeling that there were dangers in life which as yet he had not faced.

"May I ask for your explanation or your excuse?"

"You can call it an explanation or an excuse, whichever you like," Hamel replied steadily, "but the fact is that this little building, which some one else seems to have appropriated, is mine. If I had not been a good-natured person, I should be engaged, at the present moment, in turning out its furniture on to the beach."

"What is your name?" Mr. Fentolin asked suddenly.

"My name is Hamel—Richard Hamel."

For several moments there was silence. Mr. Fentolin was still leaning forward in his strange little vehicle. The color now seemed to have left even his lips. The hard glitter in his eyes had given place to an expression almost of fear. He looked at Richard Hamel as though he were some strange sea monster come up from underneath the sands.

"Richard Hamel," he repeated. "Do you mean that you are the son of Hamel, the Royal Academician, who used to be in these parts so often? He was my brother's friend."

"I am his son."

"But his son was killed in the San Francisco earthquake! I saw his name in all the lists. It was copied in the local papers here."

Hamel knocked the ashes from his pipe.

"I take a lot of killing," he observed. "I was in that earthquake, right enough, and in the hospital afterward, but it was a man named Hamel, of Philadelphia, who died."

Mr. Fentolin sat quite motionless for several minutes. He seemed, if possible, to have shrunken into something smaller still. A few yards behind, Meekins had alighted from his bicycle and was standing, waiting.

"So you are Richard Hamel," Mr. Fentolin said at last, very softly. "Welcome back to England, Richard Hamel! I knew your father slightly, although we were never very friendly."

He stretched out his hand from underneath the coverlet of his little vehicle—a hand with long, white fingers, slim, and white, and shapely as a woman's. A single ring with a dull green stone was on his fourth finger. Hamel shook hands with him as he would have shaken hands with a woman. Afterward he rubbed his fingers slowly together. There was something about the touch which worried him.

"You have been making use of this little shanty, haven't you?" he asked bluntly.

Mr. Fentolin nodded. He was apparently beginning to recover himself.

"You must remember," he explained

suavely, "that it was built by my grandfather, and that we have rights over the whole of the foreshore here from time immemorial. I know quite well that my brother gave it to your father —or rather he sold it him for a nominal sum. I must tell you that it was a most complicated transaction. He had the greatest difficulty in getting any lawyer to draft the deed of sale. There were so many ancient rights and privileges which it was impossible to deal with. Even now there are grave doubts as to the validity of the transaction. When nothing was heard of you, and we all concluded that you were dead, I ventured to take back what I honestly believed to be my own. Owing," he continued slowly, "to my unfortunate affliction, I am obliged to depend for interest in my life upon various hobbies. This little place, queerly enough, has become one of them. I have furnished it, in a way, installed the telephone to the house, connected it with my electric plant, and I come down here when I want to be quite alone, and paint. I watch the sea—such a sea sometimes, such storms, such color! You notice that ridge of sand out yonder? It forms a sort of natural breakwater. Even on the calmest day you can trace that white line of foam."

"It is a strange coast," Hamel admitted.

Mr. Hamel pointed with his forefinger northward.

"Somewhere about there," he indicated, "is the entrance to the tidal river which flows up to the village of St. David's yonder. You see?"

His finger traced its course from landward until it came to a certain point near the beach, where a tall black pillar stood, surmounted by a globe.

"I have had a light fixed there for the benefit of the fishermen," he said, "a light which I work from my own dynamo. Between where we are sitting now and there—only a little way out to sea —is a jagged cluster of cruel rocks. You can see them if you care to swim out in calm weather. Fishermen who tried to come in by night were so often trapped there, and in a rough sea, drowned. That is why I had that pillar of light built. On stormy nights it shows the exact entrance to the water causeway."

"Very kind of you indeed," Hamel remarked, "very benevolent."

Mr. Fentolin sighed.

"So few people have any real feeling for sailors," he continued. "The fishermen around here are certainly rather a casual class. Do you know that there is scarcely one of them who can swim? There isn't one of them who isn't too lazy to learn even the simplest stroke. My brother used to say—dear Gerald—that it served them right if they were drowned. I have never been able to feel like that, Mr. Hamel. Life is such a wonderful thing. One night," he went on, dropping his voice, and leaning a little forward in his carriage, "it was just before—or was it just after I had fixed that light?—I was down here one dark winter night. There was a great north wind, and a huge sea running. It was as black as pitch, but I heard a boat, making for St. David's Causeway, strike on those rocks just hidden in front there. I heard those fishermen shriek as they went under. I heard their shouts for help, I heard their death cries. Very terrible, Mr. Hamel! Very terrible!"

Hamel looked at the speaker curiously. Mr. Fentolin seemed absorbed in his subject. He had spoken with relish, as one who loves the things he speaks about. Quite unaccountably, Hamel found himself shivering.

"It was their mother," Mr. Fentolin continued, leaning again a little forward in his chair, "their mother, whom I saw pass along the beach just now—a widow, too, poor thing. She comes here

often—a morbid taste. She spoke to you, I think?"

"She spoke to me strangely," Hamel admitted. "She gave me the impression of a woman whose brain had been turned with grief."

"Too true," Mr. Fentolin sighed. "The poor creature! I offered her a small pension, but she would have none of it. A superior woman in her way once, filled now with queer fancies," he went on, eying Hamel steadily, "the very strangest fancies. She spends her life prowling about here. No one in the village knows even how she lives. Did she speak of me, by the bye?"

"She spoke of you as being a very kind-hearted man."

Mr. Fentolin sighed.

"The poor creature! Well, well, let us revert to the object of your coming here. Do you really wish to occupy this little shanty, Mr. Hamel?"

"That was my idea," Hamel confessed. "I only came back from Mexico last month, and I very soon got tired of life in town. I am going abroad again next year. Till then I am rather at a loose end. My father was always very fond of this place, and very anxious that I should come and stay here for a little time, so I made up my mind to run down. I've got some more things waiting at Norwich. I thought I might hire a woman to look after me, and spend a few weeks here. They tell me that the early spring is almost the best time for this coast."

Mr. Fentolin nodded slowly. He moistened his lips for a moment. One might have imagined that he was anxious.

"Mr. Hamel," he said slowly, "you are quite right. It is the best time to visit this coast. But why make a hermit of yourself? You are a family friend. Come and stay with us at the Hall for as long as you like. It will give me the utmost pleasure to welcome you there," he went on earnestly, "and as for this little place, of what use is it to you? Let me buy it from you. You are a man of the world, I can see. You may be rich, yet money has a definite value. To me it has none. That little place, as it stands, is probably worth—say a hundred pounds. Your father gave, if I remember rightly, a five-pound note for it. I will give you a thousand for it sooner than be disturbed."

Hamel frowned slightly.

"I could not possibly," he said, "think of selling what was practically a gift to my father. You are welcome to occupy the place during my absence, in any way you wish. On the other hand, I do not think that I care to part with it altogether, and I should really like to spend just a day or so here. I am used to roughing it under all sorts of conditions—much more used to roughing it than I am to staying at country houses."

Mr. Fentolin leaned a little out of his carriage. He reached the younger man's shoulder with his hand.

"Ah, Mr. Hamel," he pleaded, "don't make up your mind too suddenly. Am I a little spoiled, I wonder? Well, you see what sort of a creature I am. I have to go through life as best I may, and people are kind to me. It is very seldom I am crossed. It is quite astonishing how often people let me have my own way. Do not make up your mind too suddenly. I have a niece and a nephew whom you must meet. There are some treasures, too, at St. David's Hall. Look at it. There isn't another house quite like it in England. It is worth looking over."

"It is most impressive," Hamel agreed, "and wonderfully beautiful. It seems odd," he added, with a laugh, "that you should care about this little shanty here, with all the beautiful rooms you must have of your own."

"It's Naboth's vineyard," Mr. Fentolin groaned. "Now, Mr. Hamel, you are going to be gracious, aren't you?

Let us leave the question of your little habitation here alone for the present. Come back with me. My niece shall give you some tea, and you shall choose your room from forty. You can sleep in a haunted chamber, or a historical chamber, in Queen Elizabeth's room, a Victorian chamber, or a Louis Quinze room. All my people have spent their substance in furniture. Don't look at your bag. Clothes are unnecessary. I can supply you with everything. Or, if you prefer it, I can send a fast car into Norwich for your own things. Come and be my guest, please."

Hamel hesitated. He had not the slightest desire to go to St. David's Hall, and, though he strove to ignore it, he was conscious of an aversion, of which he was heartily ashamed, for this strange fragment of humanity. On the other hand, his mission, the actual mission which had brought him down to these parts, could certainly best be served by an entrée into the Hall itself —and there was the girl, who, he felt sure, belonged there. He had never for a moment been able to dismiss her from his thoughts. Her still, cold face, the delicate perfection of her clothes and figure, the gray eyes which had rested upon his so curiously, haunted him. He was desperately anxious to see her again. If he refused this invitation, if he rejected Mr. Fentolin's proffered friendship, it would be all the more difficult.

"You are really very kind——" he began hesitatingly.

"It is settled," Mr. Fentolin interrupted, "settled. Meekins, you can ride back again. I shall not paint to-day. Mr. Hammel, you will walk by my side, will you not? I can run my little machine quite slowly. You see, I have an electric battery. It needs charging often, but I have a dynamo of my own. You never saw a vehicle like this in all your travelings, did you?"

Hammel shook his head.

"An electrical wheelchair," Mr. Fentolin continued. "Practice has made me remarkably skillful in its manipulation. You see, I can steer to an inch."

He was already turning around. Hamel rose to his feet.

"You are really very kind," he said. "I should like to come up and see the Hall, at any rate, but in the meantime, as we are here, could I just look over the inside of this little place? I found the large shed, where the lifeboat used to be kept, locked up."

Mr. Fentolin was maneuvering his carriage. His back was toward Hamel.

"By all means," he declared. "We will go in together. I have had the entrance widened so that I can ride straight into the sitting room. But wait."

He paused suddenly. He felt in all his pockets.

"Dear me," he exclaimed, "I find that I have left the keys! We will come down a little later, if you do not mind, Mr. Hamel. Or to-morrow, perhaps. You will not mind? It is very careless of me, but seeing you about the place, and imagining that you were an intruder, made me angry, and I started off in a hurry. Now walk by my side up to the house, please, and talk to me. It is so interesting for me to meet men," he went on, as they started along the straight path, "who do things in life; who go to foreign countries, meet strange people, and have new experiences. I have been a good many years like this, you know."

"It is a great affliction," Hamel murmured sympathetically.

"In my youth I was an athlete," Mr. Fentolin continued. "I played cricket for the varsity and for my county. I hunted, too, and shot. I did all the things a man loves to do. I might still shoot, they tell me, but my strength has ebbed away. I am too weak to lift a gun, too weak even to handle a fishing rod. I have just a few hobbies in life

which keep me alive. Are you a politician, Mr. Hamel?"

"Not in the least," Hamel replied. "I have been out of England too long to keep in touch with politics."

"Naturally," Mr. Fentolin agreed. "It amuses me to follow the course of events. I have a good many friends in London and abroad who are kind to me, who keep me informed, send me odd bits of information not available for every one, and it amuses me to put these things together in my mind and to try and play the prophet. I was in the foreign office once, you know. I take up my paper every morning, and it is one of my chief interests to see how near my own speculations come to the truth. Just now, for example, there are strange things doing on the Continent."

"In America," Hamel remarked, "they affect to look upon England as a doomed power."

"Not altogether supine yet," Mr. Fentolin observed, "yet even this last generation has seen a weakening. We have lost so much self-reliance. Perhaps it is having these grown-up children who, we think, can take care of us —Canada, and Australia, and the others. However, we will not talk of politics. It bores you, I can see. We will try and find some other subject. Now tell me, don't you think this is ingenious?"

They had reached the foot of the hill upon which the Hall was situated. In front of them, underneath the terrace, was a little iron gate, held open now by Meekins, who had gone on ahead and dismounted from his bicycle.

"I have a subterranean way from here into the hall," Mr. Fentolin explained. "Come with me. You will only have to stoop a little, and it may amuse you. You need not be afraid. There are electric lights every ten yards. I turn them on with this switch—see."

Mr. Fentolin touched a button in the wall and the place was at once brilliantly illuminated. A little row of lights from the ceiling and the walls stretched away as far as one could see. They passed through the iron gates, which shut behind them with a click. Stooping a little, Hamel was still able to walk by the side of the man in the chair. They traversed about a hundred yards of subterranean way. Here and there a fungus hung down from the wall, otherwise it was beautifully kept and dry. By and by, with a little turn, they came to an incline and another iron gate, held open for them by a footman. Mr. Fentolin sped up the last few feet into the great hall, which seemed more imposing than ever by reason of this unexpected entrance. Hamel, blinking a little, stepped to his side.

"Welcome!" Mr. Fentolin cried gayly. "Welcome, my friend, Mr. Hamel, to St. David's Hall!"

CHAPTER XIII.

Hamel, during the next half hour, was introduced to luxuries to which, in the general way, he was entirely unaccustomed. One manservant was busy preparing his bath in a room leading out of his sleeping apartment, while another brought him a choice of evening clothes and superintended his disrobing. Hamel, always observant, studied his surroundings with keen interest. He found himself in a queerly mixed atmosphere of luxurious modernity and stately antiquity. His four-poster, the huge couch at the foot of his bed—all the furniture about the room—was of the Queen Anne period. The bathroom, which communicated with his apartment, was the latest triumph of the plumber's art—a room with floor and walls of white tiles, the bath itself a little sunken and twice the ordinary size. He dispensed, so far as he could, with the services of the men, and descended, as soon as he was dressed, into the hall. Meekins was waiting at

the bottom of the stairs, dressed now in somber black.

"Mr. Fentolin will be glad if you will step into his room, sir," he announced, leading the way.

Mr. Fentolin was seated in his chair, reading the *Times,* in a corner of his library. Shaped blocks had been placed behind and in front of the wheels of his little vehicle, to prevent it from moving. A shaded reading lamp stood on the table by his side. He did not at once look up, and Hamel glanced around with genuine admiration. The shelves which lined the walls, and the winged cases which protruded into the room, were filled with books. There was a large oak table with beautifully carved legs, piled with magazines. A log fire was burning in a big open grate. The perfume from a great bowl of lavender seemed to mingle curiously, yet pleasantly, with the half-musty odor of the old leather-bound volumes. The massive chimneypiece was of black oak, and above it were carved the arms of the house of Fentolin. The walls were oak-paneled to the ceiling.

"Refreshed, I hope, by your bath and change, my dear visitor?" the head of the house remarked, as he laid down his paper. "Draw a chair up here and join me in a glass of vermouth. You need not be afraid of it. It comes to me from the maker as a special favor."

Hamel accepted a quaintly cut wineglass full of the amber liquid. Mr. Fentolin sipped his with the air of a connoisseur.

"This," he continued, "is one of our informal days. There is no one in the house save my sister-in-law, niece, and nephew, and a poor invalid gentleman who, I am sorry to say, is confined to his bed. My sister-in-law is also, I regret to say, indisposed. She desired me to present her excuses to you and to say how greatly she is looking forward to making your acquaintance during the next few days."

Hamel bowed.

"It is very kind of Mrs. Fentolin," he murmured.

"On these occasions," Mr. Fentolin continued, "we do not make use of a drawing-room. My niece will come in here presently. You are looking at my books, I see. Are you, by any chance, a bibliophile? I have a case of manuscripts here which might interest you."

Hamel shook his head.

"Only in the abstract, I fear," he answered. "I have scarcely opened a serious book since I was at Oxford."

"What was your year?" Mr. Fentolin asked.

"Fourteen years ago I left Magdalen," Hamel replied. "I had made up my mind to be an engineer, and I went over to the Boston School of Technology."

Mr. Fentolin nodded appreciatively.

"A magnificent profession," he murmured. "A healthy one, too, I should judge from your appearance. You are a strong man, Mr. Hamel."

"I have had reason to be," Hamel rejoined. "During nearly the whole of the time I have been abroad, I have been practically pioneering. Building railways in the Far West, with gangs of Chinese, and Italians, and Hungarians, and scarcely a foreman who isn't terrified of his job, isn't exactly drawing-room work."

"You are going back there?" Mr. Fentolin asked, with interest.

Hamel shook his head.

"I have no plans," he declared. "I have been fortunate enough, or shall I some day say unfortunate enough, I wonder, to have inherited a large legacy."

Mr. Fentolin smiled.

"Don't ever doubt your good fortune," he said earnestly. "The longer I live—and in my limited way I do see a good deal of life—the more I appreciate the fact that there isn't anything in this world that compares with the

power of money. I distrust a poor man. He may mean to be honest, but he is, at all times, subject to temptation. Ah, here is my niece."

Mr. Fentolin turned toward the door. Hamel rose at once to his feet. His surmise, then, had been correct. She was coming toward them very quietly. In her soft, gray dinner gown, her brown hair smoothly brushed back, a pearl necklace around her long, delicate neck, she seemed to him a very exquisite embodiment of those memories which he had been carrying about throughout the afternoon.

"Here, Mr. Hamel," his host said, "is a member of my family who has been a deserter for a short time. This is Mr. Richard Hamel. Esther; my niece, Miss Esther Fentolin."

She held out her hand with the faintest possible smile, which might have been of greeting or recognition.

"I traveled for some distance in the train with Mr. Hamel this afternoon, I think," she remarked.

"Indeed?" Mr. Fentolin exclaimed. "Dear me, that is very interesting—very interesting, indeed! Mr. Hamel, I am sure, did not tell you of his destination?"

He watched them keenly. Hamel, though he scarcely understood, was quick to appreciate the possible significance of that tentative question.

"We did not exchange confidences," he observed. "Miss Fentolin only changed into my compartment during the last few minutes of her journey. Besides," he continued, "to tell you the truth, my ideas as to my destination were a little hazy. To come and look for some queer sort of building by the side of the sea, which has been unoccupied for a dozen years or so, scarcely seems a reasonable quest, does it?"

"Scarcely, indeed," Mr. Fentolin assented. "You may thank me, Mr. Hamel, for the fact that the place is not in ruins. My blatant trespassing has saved you from that, at least. After dinner we must talk further about the Tower. To tell you the truth, I have grown accustomed to the use of the little place."

The sound of the dinner gong boomed through the house. A moment later Gerald entered, followed by a butler announcing dinner.

"The only remaining member of my family," Mr. Fentolin remarked, indicating his nephew. "Gerald, you will be pleased, I know, to meet Mr. Hamel. Mr. Hamel has been a great traveler. Long before you can remember, his father used to paint wonderful pictures of this coast."

Gerald shook hands with his visitor. His face, for a moment, lightened. He was looking pale, though, and singularly sullen and dejected.

"There are two of your father's pictures in the modern side of the gallery upstairs," he remarked, a little diffidently. "They are great favorites with everybody here."

They all went in to dinner together. Meekins, who had appeared silently, had glided unnoticed behind his master's chair and wheeled it across the hall.

"A *partie carrée* to-night," Mr. Fentolin declared. "I have a resident doctor here, a very delightful person, who often dines with us, but to-night I thought not. Five is an awkward number. I want to get to know you better, Mr. Hamel, and quickly. I want you, too, to make friends with my niece and nephew. Mr. Hamel's father," he went on, addressing the two latter, "and your father were great friends. By the bye, have I told you both exactly why Mr. Hamel is a guest here to-night—why he came to these parts at all? No? Listen, then. He came to take possession of the Tower. The worst of it is that it belongs to him, too. His father bought it from your father more years ago than we should care to talk about. I

have really been a trespasser all this time."

They took their places at a small round table in the middle of the dining room. The shaded lights, thrown downward on the table, seemed to leave most of the rest of the apartment in semidarkness. The gloomy faces of the men and women whose pictures hung upon the walls were almost invisible. The servants themselves, standing a little outside the halo of light, were like shadows passing swiftly and noiselessly backward and forward. At the far end of the room was an organ, and to the left a little balcony, as though built out for an orchestra. Hamel looked about him almost in wonderment. There was something curiously impressive in the size of the apartment and its emptiness.

"A trespasser," Mr. Fentolin continued, as he took up the menu and criticized it through his horn-rimmed eyeglass—"that is what I have been, without a doubt."

"But for your interest and consequent trespass," Hamel remarked, "I should probably have found the roof off and the whole place in ruins."

"Instead of which you found the door locked against you," Mr. Fentolin pointed out. "Well, we shall see. I might, at any rate, have lost the opportunity of entertaining you here this evening. I am particularly glad to have an opportunity of making you known to my niece and nephew. I think you will agree with me that here are two young people who are highly to be commended. I cannot offer them a cheerful life here. There is little society, no gayety, no sort of excitement. Yet they never leave me. They seem to have no other interest in life but to be always at my beck and call. A case, Mr. Hamel, of really touching devotion. If anything could reconcile me to my miserable condition, it would be the kindness and consideration of those by whom I am surrounded."

Hamel murmured a few words of cordial agreement. Yet he found himself, in a sense, embarrassed. Gerald was looking down upon his plate, and his face was hidden. Esther's features had suddenly become stony and expressionless. Hamel felt instinctively that something was wrong.

"There are compensations," Mr. Fentolin continued, with the air of one enjoying speech, "which find their way even into the gloomiest of lives. As I lie on my back, hour after hour, I feel all the more conscious of this. The world is a school of compensations, Mr. Hamel. The interests—the mental interests, I mean—of unfortunate people like myself, come to possess, in time, a peculiar significance and to yield a peculiar pleasure. I have hobbies, Mr. Hamel. I frankly admit it. Without my hobbies, I shudder to think what might become of me. I might become a selfish, cruel, misanthropical person. Hobbies are, indeed, a great thing."

The brother and sister sat still in stony silence. Hamel, looking across the little table with its glittering load of cut glass, and silver, and scarlet flowers, caught something in Esther's eyes, so rarely expressive of any emotion whatever, which puzzled him. He looked swiftly back at his host. Mr. Fentolin's face, at that moment, was like a beautiful cameo. His expression was one of gentle benevolence.

"Let me be quite frank with you," Mr. Fentolin murmured. "My occupation of the Tower is one of these hobbies. I love to sit there, within a few yards of the sea, and watch the tide come in. I catch something of the spirit, I think, which caught your father, Mr. Hamel, and kept him a prisoner here. In my small way I, too, paint while I am down there, paint and dream. These things may not appeal to you, but you must remember that

there are few things left to me in life, and that those, therefore, which I can make use of are dear to me. Gerald, you are silent to-night. How is it that you say nothing?"

"I am tired, sir," the boy answered quietly.

Mr. Fentolin nodded gravely.

"It is inexcusable of me," he declared smoothly, "to have forgotten even for a moment. My nephew, Mr. Hamel," he went on, "had quite an exciting experience last night—or rather, series of experiences. He was, first of all, in a railway accident, and then, for the sake of a poor fellow who was with him, and who was badly hurt, he motored back here in the gray hours of the morning, and ran, they tell me, considerable risk of being drowned on the marshes. A very wonderful and praiseworthy adventure, I consider it. I trust that our friend upstairs, when he recovers, will be properly grateful."

Gerald rose to his feet precipitately. The service of dinner was almost concluded, and he muttered something which sounded like an excuse. Mr. Fentolin, however, stretched out his hand and motioned him to resume his seat.

"My dear Gerald!" he exclaimed reprovingly. "You would leave us so abruptly? Before your sister, too! What will Mr. Hamel think of our country ways? Pray resume your seat."

For a moment the boy stood quite still, then he slowly subsided into his chair. Mr. Fentolin passed around a decanter of wine which had been placed upon the table by the butler. The servants had now left the room.

"You must excuse my nephew, if you please, Mr. Hamel," he begged. "Gerald has a boy's curious aversion to praise in any form. I am looking forward to hearing your verdict upon my port. The collection of wine and pictures was a hobby of my grandfather's, for which we, his descendants, can never be sufficiently grateful."

Hamel praised his wine, as indeed he had every reason to, but for a few moments the smooth conversation of his host fell upon deaf ears. He looked from the boy's face, pale and wrinkled as though with some sort of suppressed pain, to the girl's still, stony expression. This was, indeed, a house of mysteries! There was something here incomprehensible, something about the relations of these three and their knowledge of one another, utterly baffling. It was the queerest household, surely, into which any stranger had ever been precipitated.

"The planting of trees and the laying down of port are two virtues in our ancestors which have never been properly appreciated," Mr. Fentolin continued. "Let us, at any rate, free ourselves from the reproach of ingratitude so far as regards my grandfather—Gerald Fentolin—to whom, I believe, we are indebted for this wine. We will drink——"

Mr. Fentolin broke off in the middle of his sentence. The august calm of the great house had been suddenly broken. From upstairs came the tumult of raised voices, the slamming of a door, the falling of something heavy upon the floor. Mr. Fentolin listened with a grim change in his expression. His smile had departed, his lower lip was thrust out, his eyebrows met. He raised the little whistle which hung from his chain. At that moment, however, the door was opened. Doctor Sarson appeared.

"I am sorry to disturb you, Mr. Fentolin," he said, "but our patient is becoming a little difficult. The concussion has left him, as I feared it might, in a state of nervous excitability. He insists upon an interview with you."

Mr. Fentolin backed his little chair from the table. The doctor came over and laid his hand upon the handle.

"You will, I am sure, excuse me for a few moments, Mr. Hamel," his host begged. "My niece and nephew will do their best to entertain you. Now, Sarson, I am ready."

Mr. Fentolin glided across the dim, empty spaces of the splendid apartment, followed by the doctor—a ghostly little procession it seemed. The door was closed behind them. For a few moments a curious silence ensued. Gerald remained tense and apparently suffering from some sort of suppressed emotion. Esther, for the first time, moved in her place. She leaned toward Hamel. Her lips were slowly parted, her eyes sought the door as though in terror. Her voice, although save for themselves there was no one else in the whole of that great apartment, had sunk to the lowest of whispers.

"Are you a brave man, Mr. Hamel?" she asked.

He was staggered, but he answered her promptly:

"I believe so."

"Don't give up the Tower—just yet. That is what—he has brought you here for. He wants you to give it up and go back. Don't!"

The earnestness of her words was unmistakable. Hamel felt the thrill of coming events.

"Why not?"

"Don't ask me," she begged. "Only, if you are brave, if you have feeling for others, keep the Tower, if it be only for a week. Hush!"

The door had been noiselessly opened. It was the doctor who appeared. He advanced to the table with a grave little bow.

"Mr. Fentolin," he said, "has been kind enough to suggest that I take a glass of wine with you. My presence is not needed upstairs. Mr. Hamel," he added, "I am glad, sir, to make your acquaintance. I have, for a long time, been a great admirer of your father's work."

He took his place at the head of the table, and, filling his glass, bowed toward Hamel. Once more Gerald and his sister relapsed almost automatically into an indifferent and cultivated silence. Hamel found civility toward the newcomer difficult. Unconsciously his attitude became that of the other two. He resented the intrusion. He found himself regarding the advent of Doctor Sarson as possessing some secondary significance. It was almost as though Mr. Fentolin preferred not to leave him alone with his niece and nephew.

CHAPTER XIV.

Mr. Fentolin, on leaving the dining room, steered his chair with great precision through the open, wrought-iron doors of a small elevator at the farther end of the hall, which Doctor Sarson, who stepped in with him, promptly directed to the second floor. Here they made their way to the room in which Mr. Dunster was lying.

Doctor Sarson opened the door and looked in. Almost immediately he stood on one side and nodded to Mr. Fentolin.

"If there is any trouble," he whispered, "send for me. I am better away, for the present. My presence only excites him."

Mr. Fentolin nodded. "You are right. Go down into the dining room. I am not sure about that fellow Hamel, and Gerald is in a queer temper. Stay with them. See that they are not alone."

The doctor silently withdrew, and Mr. Fentolin glided past him into the room. Mr. John P. Dunster, in his night clothes, was sitting on the side of the bed. Standing within a few feet of him, watching him all the time with the subtle intentness of a cat watching a mouse, stood Meekins. Mr. Dunster's head was still bound, although

the bandage had slipped a little, apparently in some struggle. His face was chalklike and he was breathing quickly. Nevertheless, his voice, when he spoke, was clear and firm.

"So you've come at last!" he exclaimed, a little truculently. "Are you Mr. Fentolin?"

Mr. Fentolin gravely admitted his identity. His eyes rested upon his guest with an air of tender interest. His face was almost beautiful.

"You are the owner of this house—I am underneath your roof—is that so?"

"This is certainly St. David's Hall," Mr. Fentolin replied. "It really appears as though your conclusions were correct."

"Then will you tell me why I am kept a prisoner here?"

Mr. Fentolin's expression was for a moment clouded. He seemed hurt.

"A prisoner," he repeated softly. "My dear Mr. Dunster, you have surely forgotten the circumstances which procured for me the pleasure of this visit; the condition in which you arrived here—only, after all, a very few hours ago?"

"The circumstances," Mr. Dunster declared dryly, "are to me still inexplicable. At Liverpool Street station I was accosted by a young man who informed me that his name was Gerald Fentolin, and that he was on his way to The Hague to play in a golf tournament. His story seemed entirely probable, and I permitted him a seat in the special train I had chartered for Harwich. There was an accident, and I received this blow to my head—only a trifling affair, after all. I come to my senses to find myself here. I do not know exactly what part of the world you call this, but from the fact that I can see the sea from my window, it must be some considerable distance from the scene of the accident. I find that my dressing case has been opened, my pocketbook examined, and I am apparently a prisoner. I ask you, Mr. Fentolin, for an explanation."

Mr. Fentolin smiled reassuringly.

"My dear sir," he said, "my dear Mr. Dunster, I believe I may have the pleasure of calling you—your conclusions seem to me just a little melodramatic. My nephew—Gerald Fentolin—did what I consider the natural thing, under the circumstances. You had been courteous to him, and he repaid the obligation to the best of his ability. The accident to your train happened in a dreary part of the country, some thirty miles from here. My nephew adopted a course which, I think, under the circumstances, was the natural and hospitable one. He brought you to his home. There was no hospital or town of any importance nearer."

"Very well," Mr. Dunster decided, "I will accept your version of the affair. I will, then, up to this point, acknowledge myself your debtor. But will you tell me why my dressing case has been opened, my clothes removed, and a pocketbook containing papers of great importance to me has been tampered with?"

"My dear Mr. Dunster," his host replied calmly, "you surely cannot imagine that you are among thieves! Your dressing case was opened and the contents of your pocketbook inspected, with a view to ascertaining your address, or the name of some friends with whom we might communicate."

"Am I to understand that they are to be restored to me, then?" Mr. Dunster demanded.

"Without a doubt, yes!" Mr. Fentolin assured him. "You, however, are not fit for anything, at the present moment, but to return to your bed, from which I understand you rose rather suddenly a few minutes ago."

"On the contrary," Mr. Dunster insisted, "I am feeling absolutely well enough to travel. I have an appointment on the Continent of great im-

portance, as you may judge by the fact that at Liverpool Street I chartered a special train. I trust that nothing in my manner may have given you offense, but I am anxious to get through with the business which brought me over to this side of the water. I have sent for you to ask that my pocketbook, dressing case, and clothes be at once restored to me, and that I be provided with the means of continuing my journey without a moment's further delay."

Mr. Fentolin shook his head, very gently, very regretfully, but also firmly.

"Mr. Dunster," he pleaded, "do be reasonable. Think of all you have been through. I can quite sympathize with you in your impatience, but I am forced to tell you that the doctor who has been attending you since the moment you were brought into this house, has absolutely forbidden anything of the sort."

Mr. Dunster seemed, for a moment, to struggle for composure.

"I am an American citizen," he declared. "I am willing to listen to the advice of any physician, but so long as I take the risk I am not bound to follow it. In the present case I decline to follow it. I ask for facilities to leave this house at once."

Mr. Fentolin sighed.

"In your own interests," he said calmly, "they will not be granted to you."

Mr. Dunster had spoken all the time like a man struggling to preserve his self-control. There were signs now that his will was ceasing to serve him. His eyes flashed fire, his voice was raised.

"Will not be granted to me?" he repeated. "Do you mean to say, then, that I am to be kept here against my will?"

Mr. Fentolin made no immediate reply. With the delicate fingers of his right hand he pushed back the hair from his forehead. He looked at his questioner soothingly, as one might look at a spoiled child.

"Against my will?" Mr. Dunster repeated, raising his voice still higher. "Mr. Fentolin, if the truth must be told, I have heard of you before and been warned against you. I decline to accept any longer the hospitality of your roof. I insist upon leaving it. If you will not provide me with any means of doing so, I will walk."

He made a motion as though to rise from the bed. Meekins' hand very gently closed upon his arm. One could judge that the grip was like a grip of iron.

"Dear me," Mr. Fentolin said, "this is really very unreasonable of you! If you have heard of me, Mr. Dunster, you ought to understand that, notwithstanding my unfortunate physical trouble, I am a person of consequence and position in this county. I am a magistrate, ex-high sheriff, and a great landowner here. I think I may say, without boasting, that I represent one of the most ancient families in this country. Why, therefore, should you treat me as though it were to my interest to inveigle you under my roof, and keep you there for some guilty purpose? Cannot you understand that it is for your own good I hesitate to part with you?"

"I understand nothing of the sort," Mr. Dunster exclaimed angrily. "Let us bring this nonsense to an end. I want my clothes, and if you won't lend me a car or a trap, I'll walk to the nearest railway station."

Mr. Fentolin shook his head.

"I am quite sure," he said, "that you are not in a position to travel. Even in the dining room just now I heard a disturbance for which I was told that you were responsible."

"I simply insisted upon having my clothes," Mr. Dunster explained. "Your servant refused to fetch them. Perhaps I lost my temper. If so, I am

sorry. I am not used to being thwarted."

"A few days' rest——" Mr. Fentolin began.

"A few days' rest be hanged!" Mr. Dunster interrupted fiercely. "Listen, Mr. Fentolin," he added, with the air of one making a last effort to preserve his temper, "the mission with which I am charged is one of greater importance than you can imagine. So much depends upon it that my own life, if that is in danger, would be a mere trifle in comparison with the issues involved. If I am not allowed to continue upon my journey at once, the consequences may be more serious than I can tell you, to you and yours, to your own country. There!—I am telling you a great deal, but I want you to understand that I am in earnest. I have a mission which I must perform, and which I must perform quickly."

"You are very mysterious," Mr. Fentolin murmured.

"I will leave nothing to chance," Mr. Dunster continued. "Send this man, who seems to have constituted himself my jailer, out of earshot, and I will tell you even more."

Mr. Fentolin turned to Meekins.

"You can leave the room for a moment," he ordered. "Wait upon the threshold."

Meekins very unwillingly turned to obey.

"You will excuse me, sir," he objected doubtfully, "but I am not at all sure that he is safe."

Mr. Fentolin smiled faintly.

"You need have no fear, Meekins," he declared. "I am quite sure that you are mistaken. I think that Mr. Dunster is incapable of any act of violence toward a person in my unfortunate position. I am willing to trust myself with him—perfectly willing, Meekins."

Meekins, with ponderous footsteps, left the room and closed the door behind him. Mr. Fentolin leaned a little forward in his chair. It seemed as though he were on springs. The fingers of his right hand had disappeared in the pocket of his black velvet dinner coat. He was certainly prepared for all emergencies.

"Now, Mr. Dunster," he said softly, "you can speak to me without reserve."

Mr. Dunster dropped his voice. His tone became one of fierce eagerness.

"Look here," he exclaimed, "I don't think you ought to force me to give myself away like this, but, after all, you are an Englishman, with a stake in your country, and I presume you don't want her to take a back seat for the next few generations. Listen here. It's to save your country that I want to get to The Hague without a second's delay. I tell you that if I don't get there, if the message I convey doesn't reach its destination, you may find an agreement signed between certain powers which will mean the greatest diplomatic humiliation which Great Britain has ever known. Aye, and more than that!" Mr. Dunster continued. "It may be that the bogy you've been setting before yourself for all these years may trot out into life, and you may find St. David's Hall a barrack for German soldiers before many months have passed."

Mr. Fentolin shook his head in gentle disbelief.

"You are speaking to one," he declared, "who knows more of the political situation than you imagine. In my younger days I was in the foreign office. Since my unfortunate accident I have preserved the keenest interest in politics. I tell you frankly that I do not believe you. As the powers are grouped at present, I do not believe in the possibility of a successful invasion of this country."

"Perhaps not," Mr. Dunster replied eagerly, "but the grouping of the powers as it has existed during the last few years is on the eve of a great change. I cannot take you wholly into

my confidence. I can only give you my word of honor as a friend to your country that the message I carry is her only salvation. Having told you as much as that, I do not think I am asking too much if I ask you for my clothes and dressing case, and for the fastest motor car you can furnish me with. I guess I can get from here to Yarmouth, and from there I can charter something which will take me to the other side."

Mr. Fentolin raised the little gold whistle to his lips and blew it very softly. Meekins at once entered, closing the door behind him. He moved silently to the side of the man who had risen now from the bed, and who was standing with his hand grasping the post and his eyes fixed upon Mr. Fentolin, as though awaiting his answer.

"Our conversation," the latter said calmly, "has reached a point, Mr. Dunster, at which I think we may leave it for the moment. You have told me some very surprising things. I perceive that you are a more interesting visitor even than I had thought."

He raised his left hand, and Meekins, who seemed to have been waiting for some signal of the sort, suddenly, with a movement of his knee and right arm, flung Dunster back upon the bed. The man opened his mouth to shout, but already, with lightninglike dexterity, his assailant had inserted a gag between his teeth. Treating his struggles as the struggles of a baby, Meekins next proceeded to secure his wrists with handcuffs. He then held his feet together while he quietly wound a coil of cord around them. Mr. Fentolin watched the proceedings from his chair with an air of pleased and critical interest.

"Very well done, Meekins—very neatly done, indeed!" he exclaimed. "As I was saying, Mr. Dunster," he continued, turning his chair, "our conversation has reached a point at which I think we may safely leave it for a time. We will discuss these matters again. Your pretext of a political mission is, of course, an absurd one, but fortunately you have fallen into good hands. Take good care of Mr. Dunster, Meekins. I can see that he is a very important personage. We must be careful not to lose sight of him."

Mr. Fentolin steered his chair to the door, opened it, and passed out. On the landing he blew his whistle; the elevator almost immediately ascended. A moment or two later he glided into the dining room. The three men were still seated around the table. A decanter of wine, almost empty, was before Doctor Sarson, whose pallid cheeks, however, were as yet unflushed.

"At last, my dear guest," Mr. Fentolin exclaimed, turning to Hamel, "I am able to return to you. If you will drink no more wine, let us have our coffee in the library, you and I. I want to talk to you about the Tower."

CHAPTER XV.

Mr. Fentolin led the way to a delightful little corner of his library, where, before the open fire, an easy-chair had been drawn. He wheeled himself up to the other side of the hearthrug and leaned back with a little air of exhaustion. The butler served coffee and poured some old brandy into large and wonderfully thin glasses.

"Why my house should be turned into an asylum to gratify the hospitable instincts of my young nephew, I cannot imagine," Mr. Fentolin grumbled. "A most extraordinary person, our visitor, I can assure you. Quite violent, too, he was at first."

"Have you had any outside advice about his condition?" asked Hamel.

Mr. Fentolin glanced across those few feet of space and looked at Hamel with swift suspicion. "Why should I? Doctor Sarson is fully qualified, and

the case seems to present no unusual characteristics."

Hamel sipped his brandy thoughtfully. "I don't know why I suggested it. I only thought that an outside doctor might help you to get rid of the fellow."

Mr. Fentolin shrugged his shoulders.

"After all," he said, "the matter is of no real consequence. Doctor Sarson assures me that we shall be able to send him on his way very shortly. In the meantime, Mr. Hammel, what about the Tower?"

"What about it?" Hamel asked, selecting a cigar from the box which had been pushed his side. "I am sure I haven't any wish to inconvenience you."

"I will be quite frank. I do not dispute your right for a moment. On the other hand, my few hours daily down there have become a habit with me. I do not wish to give them up. Stay here with us, Mr. Hamel. You will be doing us a great kindness. My nephew and niece have too little congenial society. Make up your mind to give us a fortnight of your time, and I can assure you that we will do our best to make yours a pleasant stay."

Hamel was a little taken aback.

"Mr. Fentolin, I couldn't think of accepting your hospitality to such an extent. My idea in coming here was simply to fulfill an old promise to my father and to rough it at the Tower for a week or so, and when that was over, I don't suppose I should ever be likely to come back again. You had better let me carry out that plan, and afterward the place shall be entirely at your disposal."

"You don't quite understand," Mr. Fentolin persisted, a little irritably. "I sit there every morning. I want, for instance, to be there to-morrow morning, and the next morning, and the morning afterward, to finish a little seascape I have commenced. Nowhere else will do. Call it a whim, or what you will. I have begun the picture and I want to finish it."

"Well, you can sit there, all right. I shall be out playing golf or fishing. I shall do nothing but sleep there."

"And very uncomfortable you will be, Mr. Hamel. You have no servant, I understand, and there is no one in the village fit to look after you. Think of my thirty-nine empty rooms, my books here, my gardens, my motor cars, my young people, entirely at your service. You can have a suite to yourself. You can disappear when you like. To all effects and purposes you will be the master of St. David's Hall. Be reasonable. Don't you think, now, that you can spend a fortnight more pleasantly, under such circumstances, than by playing the misanthrope down at the Tower?"

"Please don't think," Hamel begged, "that I don't appreciate your hospitality. I should feel uncomfortable, however, if I paid you a visit of the length you have suggested. Come, I don't see why my occupation of the Tower should interfere with you. I should be away from it by about nine or ten o'clock every morning. I should probably only sleep there. Can't you accept the use of it all the rest of the time? I can assure you that you will be welcome to come and go as though it were entirely your own."

Mr. Fentolin had lit a cigarette and was watching the blue smoke curl upward to the ceiling.

"You're an obstinate man, Mr. Hamel, but I suppose you must have your own way. By the bye, you would only need to use the upstairs room and the sitting room. You will not need the outhouse—rather more than an outhouse, though, isn't it?—I mean the shed which leads out from the kitchen, where the lifeboat used to be kept?"

"I don't think I shall need that," Hamel admitted, a little hesitatingly.

"To tell you the truth," Mr. Fentolin continued, "among my other hobbies I have done a little inventing. I work sometimes at a model there. It is foolish, perhaps, but I wish no one to see it. Do you mind if I keep the keys of that place?"

"Not in the least. Tell me, what direction do your inventions take, Mr. Fentolin?"

"Before you go, I will show you my little model at work. Until then we will not talk of it. Now come, be frank with me. Shall we exchange ideas for a little time? Will you talk of books? They are my daily friends. I have thousands of them, beloved companions on every side. Or will you talk of politics, or travel? Or would you rather be frivolous with my niece and nephew? That, I think, is Esther playing."

"To be quite frank, I should like to talk to your niece."

Mr. Fentolin smiled, as though amused. His amusement, however, was perfectly good-natured.

"If you will open this door," he said, "you will see another one exactly opposite to you. That is the drawing-room. You will find Esther there. Before you go, will you pass me the *Quarterly Review*? Thank you."

Hamel crossed the hall, opened the door of the room to which he had been directed, and made his way to the piano. Esther was there, playing softly with eyes half closed. He came and stood by her side, and she stopped abruptly. Her eyes questioned him. Then her fingers stole once more over the keys, more softly still.

"I have just left your uncle," Hamel said. "He told me that I might come in here."

"Yes?"

"He was very hospitable. He wanted me to remain here as a guest and not go to the Tower at all."

"And you?"

"I am going to the Tower. I am going there to-morrow or the day after."

The music swelled beneath her fingers.

"For how long?"

"For a week or so. I am just giving your uncle time to clear out his belongings. I am leaving him the outhouse."

"He asked you to leave him that?" she whispered.

"Yes."

"You are not going in there at all?"

"Not at all."

Again she played a little more loudly for a few moments. Then the music died away once more.

"What reason did he give for keeping possession of that?"

"Another hobby. He is an inventor, it seems. He has the model of something there—he would not tell me what."

She shivered a little, and her music drifted away. She bent over the keys, her face was hidden from him.

"You will not go away just yet?" she asked softly. "You are going to stay for a few days, at any rate?"

"Without a doubt," he assured her. "I am altogether my own master."

"Thank God!" she murmured.

He leaned with his elbow against the top of the piano, looking down at her. Since dinner time she had fastened a large red rose in the front of her gown.

"Do you know that this is all rather mysterious?" he said calmly.

"What is mysterious?" she demanded.

"The atmosphere of the place—your uncle's queer aversion to my having the Tower; your visitor upstairs, who fights with the servants while we are at dinner; your uncle himself, whose will seems to be law not only to you but to your brother, who must be of age, I should think, and who seems to have plenty of spirit."

"We live here, both of us," she told him. "He is our guardian."

"Naturally, and yet, it may have been

my fancy, of course, but at dinner I seemed to get a queer impression."

"What was it?" she insisted, her fingers breaking suddenly into a livelier melody. "Tell me at once. You were there all the time. I could see you watching. Tell me what you thought?"

She had turned her head now. Her eyes were fixed upon his; they were large and soft; capable, he knew, of infinite expression. Yet at that moment the light that shone from them was simply one of fear, half curious, half shrinking.

"My impression," he said, "was that both of you disliked and feared Mr. Fentolin, yet for some reason or other you were his abject slaves."

Her fingers seemed suddenly inspired with diabolical strength and energy. Strange chords crashed and broke beneath them. She played some unfamiliar music with tense and fierce energy. Suddenly she paused and rose to her feet.

"Come out on to the terrace," she invited.

She opened the French windows, and they stepped out on to the long, broad stone terrace. The night was dark and there was little to be seen. The light was burning at the entrance to the waterway, a few lights were twinkling from the village. The soft moaning of the sea was distinctly audible. She moved to the wall surrounding the terrace. He followed her closely.

"You are right, Mr. Hamel," she said. "I think that I am more afraid of him than any woman ever was of any man in this world."

"Then why do you live here?" he asked. "You must have other relatives to whom you could go. And your brother—why doesn't he do something—go into one of the professions? He could surely leave easily enough?"

"I will tell you a secret," she answered calmly. "Perhaps it will help you to understand. You know my uncle's condition. You know that it was the result of an accident?"

"I have heard so."

She clutched at his arm.

"Come!" she said.

Side by side they walked the entire length of the terrace. When they reached the corner they were met with a fierce gust of wind. She battled along and he followed her. They were looking inland now. There were no lights visible—nothing but dark, chaotic emptiness. From somewhere below him he could hear the wind in the treetops.

"This way," she directed. "Be careful."

They walked to the very edge of the parapet. It was scarcely more than a couple of feet high. She pointed downward.

"Can you see?" she whispered.

By degrees his eyes faintly penetrated the darkness. It was as though they were looking down a precipice. The descent was sheer for nearly a hundred feet. At the bottom were the pine trees.

"Come here again in the morning," she whispered. "You will see then. I brought you here to show you the place. It was here that the accident happened."

"What accident?"

"Mr. Fentolin's. It was here that he went over. He was picked up with both his legs broken. They never thought that he would live."

Hamel shivered a little. As his eyes grew accustomed to the darkness, he saw more distinctly than ever the sheer fall, the tops of the bending trees below.

"What a horrible thing!" he exclaimed.

"It was more horrible than you can conceive. I do not know why I tell you this—you, a stranger—but if I do not tell some one, I think that the memory of it will drive me mad. It was no accident at all. Mr. Fentolin was thrown over!"

"By whom?" he asked.

She clung to his arm for a moment.

"Ah, don't ask me!" she begged. "No one knows. My uncle gave out, as soon as he was conscious, that it was an accident."

"That, at any rate, was fine of him," Hamel declared.

She shivered.

"He was proud, at least, of our family name. Whatever credit he deserves for it, he must have. It was owing to that accident that we became his slaves —nothing but that—his absolute slaves, to wait upon him, if he would, hand and foot. His life was, of course, ruined. So the burden came to us. We took it up, little thinking what was in store for us. Five years ago we came to live here. Gerald wanted to go into the army. I wanted to travel with my mother. Gerald has done all the work secretly, but he has never been allowed to pass his examinations. I have never left England except to spend two years at the strictest boarding school in Paris. We live here, with the shadow of this thing always with us. We are his puppets. If we hesitate to do his bidding, he reminds us. So far, we have been his creatures, body and soul. Whether it will go on, I cannot say—oh, I cannot say! It is bad for us, but—there is mother, too. He makes her life a perfect hell!"

A roar of wind came booming once more across the marshes, bending the trees which grew so thickly beneath them, and which ascended precipitately to the back of the house. The windows behind rattled. She looked around nervously.

"I am afraid of him all the time," she murmured. "He seems to overhear everything—he or his servants. Listen!"

They were silent for several moments. He whispered in her ear so closely that through the darkness he could see the fire in her eyes.

"You are telling me half," he said. "Tell me everything. Who was it who threw your uncle over the parapet?"

She stood by his side, motionless and trembling.

"It was the passion of a moment," she said at last, speaking hoarsely. "I cannot tell you. Listen! Listen!"

"There is no one near," Hamel assured her. "It is the wind which shakes the windows. I wish that you would tell me everything. I would like to be your friend. Believe me, I have that desire, really. There are so many things which I do not understand. That it is dull here for you, of course, is natural, but there is something more than that. You seem always to fear something. Your uncle is a selfish man naturally, although to look at him he seems to have the disposition of an angel. But beyond that, is there anything of which you are afraid? You seem all the time to live in fear."

She suddenly clutched his hand. There was nothing of affection in her touch, and yet he felt a thrill of delight.

"There are strange things which happen here," she whispered, "things which neither Gerald nor I understand. Yet they terrify us. I think that very soon the end will come. Neither of us can stand it very much longer. We have no friends. Somehow or other, he seems to manage to keep us always isolated."

"I shall not go away from here," Hamel said firmly, "at present. Mind, I am not at all sure that, living this solitary life as you do, you have not become a little overnervous; that you have not exaggerated the fear of some things. To me your uncle seems merely quixotic and egregiously selfish. However that may be, I am going to remain."

She clutched once more at his arm, her finger was upraised. They listened together. From somewhere behind

them came the clear, low wailing of a violin.

"It is Mr. Fentolin," she whispered. "Please come in—let us go in at once. He only plays when he is excited. I am afraid! Oh, I am afraid that something is going to happen!"

CHAPTER XVI.

"Let us," Hamel said, "follow the example of all great golfers. Let us for this morning, at any rate, imagine that our whole world is encompassed within these eighteen holes. We have been sent here, in a moment of good humor, by your tyrant uncle. The sun shines and the wind is from the west. Why not?"

"That is all very well for you," she retorted, smiling, "but I have topped my drive."

"Purely an incident. The vicissitudes of the game do not enter into the question. I have driven a ball far above my usual form, but I am not gloating over it. I prefer to remember only that I am going to spend the next two hours with you."

She played her shot, and they walked for a little way together. She was suddenly silent.

"Do you know," she said, just a little gravely, "I am not at all used to speeches of that sort?"

"Then you ought to be. Nothing but the lonely life you have been living has kept you from hearing them continually."

She laughed a little at the impotence of her rebuff and paused for a moment to make her next shot. Hamel, standing a little on one side, watched her appraisingly. Her short gray tweed skirt was obviously the handiwork of an accomplished tailor. Her gray stockings and suède shoes were immaculate, and showed a care for her appearance which pleased him. Her swing, too, revealed a grace, the grace of long arms and a supple body, at which previously he had only guessed. The sunshine seemed to have brought out a copper tinge from her abundant brown hair.

"Do you know," he remarked, "I think I am beginning to like your uncle. Great idea of his, sending us off here after breakfast."

Her face darkened for a moment, and he realized his error. The same thought, indeed, had been in both their minds. Mr. Fentolin's courteous suggestion had been offered to them almost in the shape of a command. It was scarcely possible to escape from the reflection that he had desired to rid himself of their presence for the morning.

Hamel steered the talk into other channels, and they continued the game without again alluding to Mr. Fentolin.

On the last green he suffered defeat, and acknowledged it with a little grimace.

"If I might say so, Miss Fentolin," he protested, "you are a little too good for your handicap. I used to play a very reasonable scratch myself, but I can't give you the strokes."

She smiled. "Doubtless your long absence abroad," she began slowly, "has affected your game."

"I was round in eighty-one," he grumbled.

"You must have traveled in many countries where golf was an impossibility."

"Naturally. Let us stay and have lunch and try again."

She shook her head with a little sigh of regret. "You see, the car is waiting. We are expected home. I shan't be a minute putting my clubs away."

They sped swiftly toward St. David's Hall along the level road. Far in the distance they saw it, built upon that strange hill, with the sunlight flashing in its windows. He looked at it long and curiously.

"I think," he said, "that yours is the

most extraordinarily situated house I have ever seen. Fancy a gigantic mound like that in the midst of an absolutely flat marsh."

She nodded. "There is no other house quite like it in England. I suppose it is quite a wonderful place. Have you looked at the pictures?"

"Not carefully."

"You must before you leave. Mr. Fentolin is a great judge, and so was his father."

Their road curved a little to the sea, and at its last bend they were close to the pebbly ridge on which the Tower was built. He touched the electric bell and stopped the car.

"Do let us walk along and have a look at my queer possession once more," he begged. "Luncheon, you told me, is not till half past one, and it is a quarter to now."

She hesitated for a moment and then assented. They left the car and walked along the little track, bordered with white posts, which led on to the ridge. To their right was the village, separated from them only by one level stretch of meadowland—in the background the Hall. They turned along the raised dike, just inside the pebbly beach, and she showed her companion the narrow waterway up to the village. At its entrance was a tall iron upright, with a ladder attached and a great lamp at the top.

"That is to show them the way in at night, isn't it?" he asked.

She nodded. "Yes. Mr. Fentolin had it placed there. And yet, curiously enough, since it was erected there have been more wrecks than ever."

"It doesn't seem a dangerous beach."

She pointed to a spot about fifty yards from the Tower. It was the spot to which the woman whom he had met on the day of his arrival had pointed.

"You can't see them," she said, "they are always out of sight, even when the tide is at the lowest—but there are some hideous sunken rocks there; 'The Daggers,' they call them. One or two fishing boats have been lost on them, trying to make the village. When Mr. Fentolin put up the lamp, every one thought that it would be quite safe to try and get in at night. This winter, though, there have been three wrecks which no one could understand. It must be something in the currents, or a sort of optical illusion, because in the last shipwreck one man was saved, and he swore that at the time they struck the rock, they were headed straight for the light."

They had reached the Tower now. Hamel became a little absorbed. They walked around it, and he tried the front door. He found, as he had expected, that it opened readily. He looked around for several moments.

"Your uncle has been here this morning," he remarked quietly.

"Very likely."

"That outhouse must be quite a large place. Have you any idea what it is he works upon there?"

"No," she answered.

He looked around him once more. "Mr. Fentolin has been preparing for my coming. I see that he has moved a few of his personal things."

She made no reply, only she shivered a little as she stepped back into the sunshine.

"I don't believe you like my little domicile," he said, as they started off homeward.

"I don't," she admitted curtly.

"In the train you seemed rather to discourage my coming here. Yet last night, after dinner——"

"I was wrong. I should have said nothing, and yet I couldn't help it. I don't suppose it will make any difference."

"Make any difference to what?"

"I cannot tell you. Only I have a strange antipathy to the place. I don't like it. My uncle sometimes shuts him-

self up here for quite a long time. We have an idea, Gerald and I, that things happen here sometimes which no one knows of. When he comes back, he is moody and ill-tempered, or else half mad with excitement. He isn't always the amiable creature whom you have met. He has the face of an angel, but there are times——"

"Well, don't let's talk about him," said Hamel, as her voice faltered. "Now that I am going to stay in the neighborhood for a few days, you must please remember that it is partly your responsibility. You are not going to shut yourself up, are you? You'll come and play golf again?"

"If he will let me."

"I think he will let you, all right. Between you and me, I rather think he hates having me down at the Tower at all. He will encourage anything that takes me away, even as far as the golf club."

They were approaching the Hall now. She was looking once more as she had looked last night. She had lost her color, her walk was no longer buoyant. She had the air of a prisoner who, after a brief spell of liberty, enters once more the place of his confinement. Gerald came out to meet them as they climbed the stone steps which led on to the terrace. He glanced behind as he greeted them, and then almost stealthily took a telegram from his pocket.

"This came for you," he remarked, handing it to Hamel. "I met the boy bringing it out of the office."

Hamel tore it open, with a word of thanks. Gerald stood in front of him as he read.

"If you wouldn't mind putting it away at once," he asked, a little uncomfortably. "You see, the telegraph office is in the place, and my uncle has a queer rule that every telegram is brought to him before it is delivered."

Hamel did not speak for a moment. He was looking at the few words scrawled across the pink sheet with a heavy black pencil:

Make every inquiry in your neighborhood for an American, John P. Dunster, intrusted with message of great importance, addressed to Von Dusenberg, The Hague. Is believed to have been in railway accident near Wymondham, and to have been taken from inn by young man in motor car. Suggest that he is being improperly detained.

Hamel crumpled up the telegram and thrust it into his pocket.

"By the bye," he asked, as they ascended the steps, "what did you say was the name of this poor fellow who is lying ill upstairs?"

Gerald hesitated for a moment. Then he answered, as though a species of recklessness had seized him:

"He called himself Mr. John P. Dunster."

CHAPTER XVII.

Mr. Fentolin, having succeeded in getting rid of his niece and his somewhat embarrassing guest for at least two hours, was in his study, planning out a somewhat strenuous morning, when his privacy was invaded by Doctor Sarson.

"Our guest," the latter announced, in his usual cold and measured tones, "has sent me to request that you will favor him with an interview."

Mr. Fentolin laid his pen deliberately down.

"So soon," he murmured. "Very well, Sarson, I am at his service. Say that I will come at once."

Mr. Fentolin lost no time in paying this suggested visit. Mr. John P. Dunster, shaved and clothed, was seated in a chair drawn up to the window of his room, smoking what he was forced to confess was a very excellent cigar. He turned his head as the door opened.

Mr. Fentolin waved his hand pleasantly.

"Really," he declared, "this is most agreeable. I had an idea, Mr. Dun-

ster, that I should find you a reasonable person. Men of your eminence in their profession usually are."

Mr. Dunster looked at the speaker curiously.

"And what might my profession be, Mr. Fentolin?" he asked. "You seem to know a great deal about me."

"It is true," Mr. Fentolin admitted. "I do know a great deal."

Mr. Dunster knocked the ash from his cigar.

"Well," he said, "I have been the bearer of several important communications from my side of the Atlantic to England and to the Continent, and I have always known that there was a certain amount of risk in the business. Once I had an exceedingly narrow shave," he continued reminiscently, "but this is the first time I have ever been dead up against it, and I don't mind confessing that you've fairly got me puzzled. Who the mischief are you, Mr. Fentolin, and what are you interfering about?"

Mr. Fentolin smiled queerly.

"I am what you see," he replied. "I am one of those unfortunate human beings who, by reason of their physical misfortunes, are cut off from the world of actual life. I have been compelled to seek distraction in strange quarters. I have wealth—great wealth, I suppose I should say; an inordinate curiosity, a talent for intrigue. As to the direction in which I carry on my intrigues, or even as to the direct interests which I study, that is a matter, Mr. Dunster, upon which I shall not gratify your curiosity nor anybody else's. But, you see, I am admitting freely that it does interest me to interfere in great affairs."

"But how on earth did you get to know about me and my errand? You couldn't possibly have got me here in an ordinary way. It was an entire fluke."

"There," Mr. Fentolin admitted, "you speak with some show of reason. I have a nephew, whom you have met, who is devoted to me."

"Mr. Gerald Fentolin."

"Precisely. Well, I admit frankly the truth of what you say. Your—er—shall we say capture, was by way of being a gigantic fluke. My nephew's instructions simply were to travel down by the train to Harwich with you, to endeavor to make your acquaintance, to follow you on to your destination, and, if any chance to do so occurred, to relieve you of your pocketbook. That, however, I never ventured to expect. What really happened was, as you have yourself suggested, almost in the nature of a miracle. My nephew showed himself to be possessed of gifts which were a revelation to me. He not only succeeded in traveling with you by the special train, but after its wreck he was clever enough to bring you here instead of delivering you over to the mercies of a village doctor. I really cannot find words to express my appreciation of my nephew's conduct."

"I could," Mr. Dunster muttered, "very easily!"

Mr. Fentolin sighed gently. "Perhaps our points of view might differ."

"We have spent," Mr. Dunster continued, "a very agreeable few minutes in explanations. Would it be asking too much if I now suggest that we remove the buttons from our foils?"

"Why not?" Mr. Fentolin assented smoothly. "Your first question to yourself, under these circumstances, would naturally be: 'What does Mr. Fentolin want with me?' I will answer that question for you. All that I ask—it is really very little—is the word agreed upon."

Mr. Dunster held his cigar a little way away and looked steadfastly, for a moment, at his host. "So you have interpreted my cipher?"

Mr. Fentolin spread out the palms of his hands in a delicate gesture. "My

dear Mr. Dunster, one of the simplest, I think, that was ever strung together. I am somewhat an authority upon ciphers."

"I gather," Mr. Dunster went on, although his cigar was burning itself out, "that you have broken the seal of my dispatches?"

Mr. Fentolin closed his eyes as though he had heard a discord.

"Nothing so clumsy as that, I hope," he murmured gently. "I will not insult a person of your experience and intelligence by enumerating the various ways in which the seal of a dispatch may be liquified. It is quite true that I have read, with much pleasure, the letter which you are carrying from a certain group of very distinguished men to a certain person now in The Hague. The letter, however, is replaced in its envelope; the seal is still there. You need have no fears whatever concerning it. All that I require is that one word from you."

"And if I give you that one word?"

"If you give it me, as I think you will, I shall then telegraph to my agent, or rather, I should say, to a dear friend of mine who lives at The Hague, and that single word will be cabled by him to New York."

"And in that case," Mr. Dunster inquired, "what would become of me?"

"You would give us the great pleasure of your company here for a very brief visit," Mr. Fentolin answered. "We should, I can assure you, do our very best to entertain you."

"And the dispatch which I am carrying to The Hague?"

"Would remain here with you."

Mr. Dunster knocked the ash from his cigar. Without being a man of great parts, he was a shrewd person, possessed of an abundant stock of common sense. He applied himself, for a few moments, to a consideration of this affair, without arriving at any satisfactory conclusion.

"Come, Mr. Fentolin," he said at last, "you must really forgive me, but I can't see what you're driving at. You are an Englishman, are you not?"

"I am an Englishman," Mr. Fentolin confessed; "or rather," he added, with ghastly humor, "I am half an Englishman."

"You are, I am sure, a person of intelligence, a well-read person, a person of perceptions. Surely you can see and appreciate the danger with which your country is threatened?"

"With regard to political affairs, I consider myself unusually well posted—in fact, the study of the diplomatic methods of the various great powers is rather a hobby of mine."

"Yet," Mr. Dunsten persisted, "you do not wish this letter delivered to that little conference in The Hague, which you must be aware is now sitting practically to determine the fate of your nation?"

"I do not wish," Mr. Fentolin replied, "I do not intend that that letter should be delivered. Why do you worry about my point of view? I may have a dozen reasons. I may believe that it will be good for my country to suffer a little chastisement."

"Or you may," Mr. Dunster suggested, glancing keenly at his host, "be the paid agent of some foreign power."

Mr. Fentolin shook his head.

"My means should place me above such suspicion. My income, I really believe, is rather more than fifty thousand pounds a year. I should not enter into these adventures, which naturally are not entirely dissociated from a certain amount of risk, for the purposes of financial gain."

Mr. Dunster was still mystified. "Granted that you do so from pure love of adventure," he said, "I still cannot see why you should range yourself on the side of your country's enemies."

"In time, even that may become clear

to you. At present, well—just that word, if you please?"

Mr. Dunster shook his head. "No, I do not think so. I cannot make up my mind to tell you that word."

Mr. Fentolin gave no sign of annoyance or even disappointment. He simply sighed. His eyes were full of a gentle sympathy, his face indicated a certain amount of concern.

"You distress me," he said. "Perhaps it is my fault. I have not made myself sufficiently clear. The knowledge of that word is a necessity to me. Without it I cannot complete my plans. Without it I very much fear, dear Mr. Dunster, that your sojourn with us may be longer than you have any idea of."

Mr. Dunster laughed a little derisively. "We've passed those days. I've done my best to enter into the humor of this situation, but there are limits. You can't keep prisoners in English country houses nowadays. There are a dozen ways of communicating with the outside world, and when that's once done, it seems to me that the position of Squire Fentolin, of St. David's Hall, might be a little peculiar."

Mr. Fentolin smiled, very slightly, still very blandly.

"Alas, my stalwart friend, I fear that you are by nature an optimist! I am not a betting man, but I am prepared to bet you a hundred pounds to one that you have made your last communication with the outside world until I say the word."

Mr. Dunster was obviously plentifully supplied with either courage or bravado, for he only laughed.

"Then you had better make up your mind at once, Mr. Fentolin, how soon that word is to be spoken, or you might lose your money."

Mr. Fentolin sat very quietly in his chair. "You mean, then, that you do not intend to humor me in this little matter?"

"I do not intend," Mr. Dunster assured him, "to part with the knowledge of that word to you or to any one else. When my message has been presented to the person to whom it has been addressed, when my trust is discharged, then and then only shall I send that cablegram. That moment can only arrive at the end of my journey."

Mr. Fentolin leaned now a little forward in his chair. His face was still smooth and expressionless, but there was a queer sort of meaning in his words.

"The end of your journey," he said grimly, "may be nearer than you think."

"If I am not heard of in The Hague to-morrow at the latest," Mr. Dunster pointed out, "remember that before many more hours have passed I shall be searched for, even to the far corners of the earth."

"Let me assure you," Mr. Fentolin promised serenely, "that, though your friends search for you up in the skies or down in the bowels of the earth, they will not find you. My hiding places are not as other people's."

Mr. Dunster beat lightly with his square, blunt forefinger upon the table which stood by his side.

"That's not the sort of talk I understand," he said curtly. "Let us understand one another, if we can. What is to happen to me if I refuse to give you that word?"

Mr. Fentolin held his hand in front of his eyes, as though to shut out some unwelcome vision.

"Dear me, how unpleasant! Why should you force me to disclose my plans? Be content, dear Mr. Dunster, with the knowledge of this one fact—we cannot part with you. I have thought it over from every point of view, and I have come to that conclusion; always presuming that the knowledge of that little word, of which we have spoken, remains in its secret chamber of your memory."

Mr. Dunster smoked in silence for a few minutes.

"I am very comfortable here," he remarked.

"You delight me," said Mr. Fentolin.

"Your cook," Mr. Dunster continued, "has won my heartfelt appreciation. Your cigars and wines are fit for any nobleman. Perhaps, after all, this little rest is good for me."

"Do not forget that there is always a limit fixed, whether it be one day, two days, or three days."

"A limit to your complacence, I presume?"

Mr. Fentolin assented.

"Obviously, then," Mr. Dunster concluded, "you wish those who sent me to believe that my message has been delivered. Yet there I must confess you puzzle me. What I cannot see is, to put it bluntly, where you come in. Any one of the countries represented at this little conference would only be the gainers by the miscarriage of my message, which is, without doubt, so far as they are concerned, of a distasteful nature. Your own country alone could be the sufferer. Now what interest in the world, then, is there left—what interest in the world can you possibly represent—which can be the gainer by your present action?"

Mr. Fentolin's eyes grew suddenly a little brighter. There was a light upon his face strange to witness.

"The power which is to be the gainer," he said quietly, "is the power encompassed by these walls." He touched his chest; his long, slim fingers were folded upon it. "When I meet a man whom I like, I take him into my confidence. Picture me, if you will, as a kind of Puck. Haven't you heard that with the decay of the body comes sometimes a malignant growth in the brain; a Calibanlike desire for evil to fall upon the world; a desire to escape from the loneliness of suffering, the isolation of black misery?"

Mr. John P. Dunster let his cigar burn out. He looked steadfastly at this strange little figure whose chair had imperceptibly moved a little nearer to his.

"You know what the withholding of this message you carry may mean," Mr. Fentolin proceeded. "You come here, bearing to Europe the word of a great people, a people whose voice is powerful enough even to still the gathering furies. I have read your ciphered message. It is what I feared. It is my will, mine—Miles Fentolin's—that that message be not delivered."

"I wonder whether you are in earnest."

"In your heart you know that I am. I can see the truth in your face. Now, for the first time, you begin to understand."

"To a certain extent," Mr. Dunster admitted. "Where I am still in the dark, however, is why you should expect that I should become your confederate. It is true that by holding me up and obstructing my message, you may bring about the evil you seek, but unless that word is cabled back to New York, and my senders believe that my message has been delivered, there can be no certainty. What has been trusted to me as the safest means of transmission, might, in an emergency, be committed to a cable."

"Excellent reasoning. For the very reasons you name, that word will be given."

Mr. Dunster's face was momentarily troubled. There was something in the still, cold emphasis of this man's voice which made him shiver.

"Do you think," Mr. Fentolin went on, "that I spend a great fortune buying the secrets of the world, that I live from day to day with the risk of ignominious detection always hovering about me—do you think that I do this, and am yet unprepared to run the final risks of life and death? Have you ever talked with a murderer, Mr. Dunster? Has curi-

osity ever taken you within the walls of Sing Sing? Have you sat within the cell of a doomed man, and felt the thrill of his touch, of his close presence? Well, I will not ask you those questions. I will simply tell you that you are talking to one now."

Mr. Dunster had forgotten his extinct cigar. He found it difficult to remove his eyes from Mr. Fentolin's face. He was half fascinated, half stirred with a vague, mysterious fear. Underneath these wild words ran always that hard note of truth.

"You seem to be in earnest," he said.

"I am," Mr. Fentolin assured him quietly. "I have more than once been instrumental in bringing about the death of those who have crossed my purposes. I plead guilty to the weakness of Nero. Suffering and death are things of joy to me. There!"

"I am not sure that I ought not to wring your neck," said Mr. Dunster slowly.

Mr. Fentolin smiled. His chair receded an inch or two. There was never a time when his expression had seemed more seraphic.

"There is no emergency of that sort," he remarked, "for which I am not prepared."

His little revolver gleamed for a minute beneath his cuff. He backed his chair slowly and with wonderful skill toward the door.

"We will fix the period of your probation, Mr. Dunster, at—say, twenty-four hours. Please make yourself until then entirely at home. My cook, my cellar, my cigar cabinets are at your disposal. If some happy impulse should show you the only reasonable course by dinner time, it would give me the utmost pleasure to have you join us at that meal. I can promise you a check beneath your plate which even you might think worth considering, wine in your glass which kings might sigh for, cigars by your side which even your millionaires could not buy. Au revoir!"

The door opened and closed. Mr. Dunster sat staring into the open space like a man still a little dazed.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The beautiful but somewhat austere front of St. David's Hall seemed, in a sense, transformed as Hamel and his companion climbed the worn gray steps which led on to the broad sweep of terrace. Evidently visitors had recently arrived. A dark, rather good-looking woman, with pleasant round face and a ceaseless flow of conversation, was chattering away to Mr. Fentolin. By her side stood another woman who was a stranger to Hamel—thin, still elegant, with tired, worn face, and the shadow of something in her eyes which reminded him at once of Esther. She wore a large picture hat and carried a little Pomeranian dog under her arm. In the background, an insignificant-looking man, with gray side whiskers and spectacles, was beaming upon everybody. Mr. Fentolin waved his hand and beckoned to Hamel and Esther as they somewhat hesitatingly approached.

"This is one of my fortunate mornings, you see, Esther!" he exclaimed, smiling. "Lady Saxthorpe has brought her husband over to lunch. Lady Saxthorpe"—he turned to the woman at his side—"let me present to you the son of one of the first men to realize the elusive beauty of our coast. This is Mr. Hamel, son of Peter Hamel, R. A.—the Countess of Saxthorpe."

Lady Saxthorpe, who had been engaged in greeting Esther, held out her hand, and smiled good-humoredly at Hamel.

"I know your father's work quite well," she said, "and I don't wonder that you have made a pilgrimage here. They tell me that he painted nineteen pictures—pictures of importance, that

is to say—within this little area of ten miles. Do you paint, Mr. Hamel?"

"Not at all," Hamel answered.

"Our friend Hamel," Mr. Fentolin intervened, "woos other and sterner muses. He fights Nature in distant countries, spans her gorges with iron bridges, stems the fury of her rivers, and carries to the boundary of the world that little twin line of metal which brings men like ants to the work heaps of the universe. My dear Florence," he added, suddenly turning to the woman at his other side, "for the moment I had forgotten. You have not met our guest yet. Hamel, this is my sister-in-law, Mrs. Seymour Fentolin."

She held out her hand to him, unnaturally thin and white, covered with jewels. Again he saw something in her eyes which stirred him vaguely.

"It is so nice that you are able to spend a few days with us, Mr. Hamel," she said quietly. "I am sorry that I have been too indisposed to make your acquaintance earlier."

"And, Saxthorpe," Mr. Fentolin continued, "you must know my young friend here, too. Mr. Hamel—Lord Saxthorpe."

The latter shook hands heartily with the young man.

"I knew your father quite well," he said. "Queer thing, he used to hang out for months at a time at that little shanty on the beach there. Hardest work in the world to get him away. He came over to dine with us once or twice, but we saw scarcely anything of him. I hope his son will not prove so obdurate."

"You are very kind," Hamel murmured.

"Mr. Hamel came into these parts to claim his father's property," Mr. Fentolin said. "However, I have persuaded him to spend a day or two up here before he transforms himself into a misanthrope. What of his golf, Esther, eh?"

"Mr. Hamel plays very well indeed," the girl replied.

"Your niece was too good for me," Hamel confessed.

Mr. Fentolin smiled. "The politeness of this younger generation keeps the truth sometimes hidden from us. I perceive that I shall not be told who won. Lady Saxthorpe, you are fortunate indeed in the morning you have chosen for your visit. There is no sun in the world like an April sun, and no corner of the earth where it shines with such effect as here. Look steadily to the eastward of that second dike, and you will see the pink light upon the sands, which baffled every one until our friend Hamel came and caught it on to his canvas."

"I do see it," Lady Saxthorpe murmured. "What eyes you have, Mr. Fentolin! What perception for color!"

"Dear lady, I am one of those who benefit by the law of compensations. On a morning like this I can spend hours merely feasting my eyes upon this prospect, and I can find, if not happiness, the next best thing. The world is full of beautiful places, but the strange part of it is that beauty has countless phases, and each phase differs in some subtle and unexplainable manner from all others. Look with me fixedly, dear Lady Saxthorpe. Look, indeed, with more than your eyes. Look at that flush of wild lavender, where it fades into the sands on one side, and strikes the emerald green of that wet sea moss on the other. Look at the liquid blue of that tone of sea which creeps along its bed through the yellow sands, through the dark meadowland, which creeps and oozes and widens till in an hour's time it will have become a river. Look at my sand islands, virgin from the foot of man, the home of sea gulls, the islands of a day. There may be other and more beautiful places. There is none quite like this."

"I pity you no longer," Lady Sax-

thorpe asserted fervently. "The eyes of the artist are a finer possession than the limbs of the athlete."

The butler announced luncheon, and they all trooped in. Hamel found himself next to Lady Saxthorpe.

"Dear Mr. Fentolin has been so kind," she confided to him as they took their places. "I came in fear and trembling to ask for a very small check for my dear brother's diocese. My brother is a colonial bishop, you know. Can you imagine what Mr. Fentolin has given me?"

Hamel wondered politely. Lady Saxthorpe continued, with an air of triumph:

"A thousand pounds! Just fancy that —a thousand pounds! And some people say he is so difficult," she went on, dropping her voice. "Mrs. Hungerford came all the way over from Norwich to beg for the infirmary there, and he gave her nothing."

"What was his excuse?" asked Hamel.

"I think he told her that it was against his principles to give to hospitals. He thinks that they should be supported out of the rates."

"Some people have queer ideas of charity. Now, I am afraid that if I had been Mr. Fentolin, I would have given the thousand pounds willingly to a hospital, but not a penny to a mission."

Mr. Fentolin looked suddenly down the table. He was some distance away, but his hearing was wonderful.

"Ah, my dear Hamel," he said, "believe me, missions are very wonderful things. It is only from a very careful study of their results that I have brought myself to be a considerable supporter of those where I have some personal knowledge of the organization. Hospitals, on the other hand, provide for the poor what they ought to be able to provide for themselves. The one thing to avoid in the giving away of money is pauperization. What do you think, Florence?"

His sister-in-law, who was seated at the other end of the table, looked across at him with a bright but stereotyped smile.

"I agree with you, of course, Miles. I always agree with you. Mr. Fentolin has the knack of being right about most things," she continued, turning to Lord Saxthorpe. "His judgment is really wonderful."

"Wish we could get him to come and sit on the bench sometimes, then," Lord Saxthorpe remarked heartily. "Our neighbors in this part of the world are not overburdened with brains. By the bye, that reminds me. You haven't got such a thing as a mysterious invalid in the house, have you?"

There was a moment's rather curious silence. Mr. Fentolin was sitting like a carved figure, with a glass of wine half raised to his lips. Gerald had broken off in the middle of a sentence and was staring at Lord Saxthorpe. Esther was sitting perfectly still, her face grave and calm, her eyes alone full of fear. Lord Saxthorpe was not an observant man, and he continued, quite unconscious of the sensation which his question had aroused:

"Sounds a silly thing to ask you, doesn't it? They're all full of it at Wells, though. I sat on the bench this morning, and went into the police station for a moment first. Seems they've got a long dispatch from Scotland Yard about a missing man who is supposed to be in this part of the world. He came down in a special train on Tuesday night—the night of the great flood—and his train was wrecked at Wymondham. After that he was taken on by some one in a motor car. Colonel Renshaw wanted me to allude to the matter from the bench, but it seemed to me that it was an affair entirely for the police."

As though suddenly realizing the un-

expected interest which his words had caused, Lord Saxthorpe brought his sentence to a conclusion, and glanced inquiringly around the table.

"A man could scarcely disappear in a civilized neighborhood like this," said Mr. Fentolin quietly, "but there is a certain amount of coincidence about your question. May I ask whether it was altogether a haphazard one?"

"Absolutely," Lord Saxthorpe declared. "The idea seems to be that the fellow was brought to one of the houses in the neighborhood, and we were all rather chaffing one another this morning about it. Inspector Yardley—the stout fellow with the beard, you know—was just starting off in his dogcart to make inquiries round the neighborhood. If any one in fiction wants a type of the ridiculous detective, there he is, ready-made."

"The coincidence of your question," said Mr. Fentolin smoothly, "is certainly a strange one. The mysterious stranger is within our gates."

Lady Saxthorpe, who had been out of the conversation for far too long, laid down her knife and fork.

"My dear Mr. Fentolin!" she exclaimed. "My dear Mrs. Seymour! This is really most exciting! Do tell us all about it at once. I thought that the man was supposed to have been decoyed away in a motor car. Do you know his name, and all about him?"

"There are a few minor points," said Mr. Fentolin, "such as his religious convictions and his size in boots, which I could not swear about, but so far as regards his name and his occupation, I think I can gratify your curiosity. He is a Mr. John P. Dunster, and he appears to be the representative of an American firm of bankers, on his way to Germany to conclude a loan."

"God bless my soul!" cried Lord Saxthorpe wonderingly. "The fellow is actually here under this roof! But who brought him? How did he find his way?"

"Better ask Gerald. He is the abductor. It seems that they both missed the train from Liverpool Street, and Mr. Dunster invited Gerald to travel down in his special train. Very kind of him, but might have been very unlucky for Gerald. As you know, they got smashed up at Wymondham, and Gerald, feeling in a way responsible for him, brought him on here; quite properly, I think. Sarson has been looking after him, but I am afraid he has slight concussion of the brain."

"I shall remember this all my life," Lord Saxthorpe declared solemnly, "as one of the most singular coincidences which have ever come within my personal knowledge. Perhaps after lunch, Mr. Fentolin, you will let some of your people telephone to the police station at Wells? There really is an important inquiry respecting this man. I should not be surprised," he added, dropping his voice a little for the benefit of the servants, "to find that Scotland Yard needed him on their own account."

"In that case," said Mr. Fentolin, "he is quite safe, for Sarson tells me there is no chance of his being able to travel, at any rate for twenty-four hours."

Lady Saxthorpe shivered.

"Aren't you afraid to have him in the house?" she asked. "A man who is really and actually wanted by Scotland Yard? When one considers that nothing ever happens here except an occasional shipwreck in the winter and a flower show in the summer, it does sound positively thrilling. I wonder what he has done."

They discussed the subject of Mr. Dunster's possible iniquities. Meanwhile, a young man carrying his hat in his hand, had slipped in past the servants, and was leaning over Mr. Fentolin's chair. He laid two or three sheets of paper upon the table, and waited while his employer glanced them

through, and dismissed him with a little nod.

"My wireless has been busy this morning," said Mr. Fentolin. "We seem to have collected about forty messages from different battleships and cruisers. There must be a whole squadron barely thirty miles out."

"You don't really think there is any fear of war, do you, Mr. Fentolin?" asked Lady Saxthorpe.

He answered her, with a certain amount of gravity:

"Who can tell? The papers this morning were bad. This conference at The Hague is still unexplained. France's attitude in the matter is especially mysterious."

"I am a strong supporter," Lord Saxthorpe said, "of Lord Roberts, and I believe in the vital necessity of some scheme for national service. At the same time, I find it hard to believe that a successful invasion of this country is within the bounds of possibility."

"I quite agree with you, Lord Saxthorpe," Mr. Fentolin declared smoothly. "All the same, this Hague conference is a most mysterious affair. The papers this morning are ominously silent about the fleet. From the tangle of messages we have picked up, I should say, without a doubt, that some form of mobilization is going on in the North Sea. If Lady Saxthorpe thinks it warm enough, shall we take our coffee upon the terrace?"

"The terrace, by all means," her ladyship assented, rising from her place. "What a wonderful man you are, Mr. Fentolin, with your wireless telegraphy, and your telegraph office in the house, and telephones. Does it really amuse you to be so modern?"

"To a certain extent, yes," Mr. Fentolin sighed, as he guided his chair along the hall. "When my misfortune first came, I used to speculate a good deal upon the Stock Exchange. That was really the reason I went in for all these modern appliances."

"And now?" she asked. "What use do you make of them now?"

Mr. Fentolin smiled quietly. He looked out seaward, beyond the sky line, from whence had come to him, through the clouds, that tangle of messages.

"I like to feel," he said, "that the turning wheel of life is not altogether out of earshot. I like to dabble just a little in the knowledge of these things."

Lord Saxthorpe came strolling up to them.

"You won't forget to telephone about this guest of yours?" he asked fussily.

"It is already done," Mr. Fentolin assured him. "My dear sister, why so silent?"

Mrs. Seymour turned slowly toward him. She, too, had been standing with her eyes fixed upon the distant sea line. Her face seemed suddenly to have aged, her forced vivacity to have departed. Her little Pomeranian rubbed against her feet in vain. Yet at the sound of Mr. Fentolin's voice she seemed to come back to herself as though by magic.

"I was looking where you were looking," she declared lightly, "just trying to see a little way beyond. So silly, isn't it? Chow-Chow, you bad little dog, come and you shall have your dinner."

She strolled off, humming a tune. Lord Saxthorpe watched her with a shadow upon his plain, good-humored face.

"Somehow or other," he remarked quietly, "Mrs. Seymour never seems to have got over the loss of her husband, does she? How long is it since he died?"

"Eight years," Mr. Fentolin replied. "It was just six months after my own accident."

"I am losing a great deal of sympathy

for you, Mr. Fentolin," said Lady Saxthorpe, coming over to his side. "You have so many resources, there is so much in life which you can do. You paint, as we all know, exquisitely. They tell me that you play the violin like a master. You have unlimited time for reading, and they say that you are one of the greatest living authorities on the politics of Europe. Your morning paper must bring you so much that is interesting."

"It is true," Mr. Fentolin admitted, "that I have compensations which no one can guess at, compensations which appeal to me more as time steals on. And yet——" He stopped short.

"And yet?" Lady Saxthorpe repeated interrogatively.

Mr. Fentolin was watching Gerald drive golf balls from the lawn beneath. He pointed downward.

"I was like that when I was his age," he said quietly.

To be continued in the June month-end number, on sale May 23rd.

THE FEATURE OF THE BANQUET

THE best way to start this story is to make the statement that Susan B. Anthony, the great reformer, died in 1906.

Getting back to more modern times, the Custom Cutters' Association of America and Doctor Mary Walker had their headquarters at the New Willard Hotel in Washington during the first week of last February. On the evening set for the annual banquet given by the association to its members and their women relatives, somebody approached Mr. L. B. Sprengel, toastmaster for the occasion, with this proposition:

"We will have with us to-night the flower and the cream of the custom cutters of the world. It will be a great occasion. We can make it even greater than we had expected it to be. There is now in this hotel Doctor Mary Walker, the only woman ever given permission by Congress to appear on the streets or in the house, at any time or at any place, in the garb and habiliments of mere man. Why would it not be a great thing to have the custom cutters, the clothers of men, addressed by the only woman who has this remarkable privilege?"

Mr. Sprengel said the idea was splendid.

At the proper time, the introductions having been made, and the invitation having been offered and accepted, the famous Doctor Walker appeared in the lobby of the hotel, prepared to attend the banquet and make the speech. She was in full evening dress, two-tailed coat, two-legged trousers, pearl shirt studs, white tie, and other choice bits of decoration.

The banquet began and proceeded. A commanding list of speakers, including a couple of members of Congress, said their little say, and subsided.

Arose Mr. Sprengel, prepared to spring the big event.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he said, with that dignity which always envelops a man who is about to introduce a famous character, male or female, "you will now have the treat of your lives. It comes in the nature of a surprise, but it will be none the less delightful and exciting. It comes in the nature of a novelty, but for that reason it will be all the more entertaining. I have the pleasure of introducing to you the only woman who enjoys the congressional permission to wear male attire. I present to you, ladies and gentlemen, Miss Susan B. Anthony."

The riot lasted twelve minutes and thirty-three seconds.

Her Weight in Gold

By Elmore Elliott Peake

Author of "The Lawbreakers of Petit Bois," "When Scholarship Came to Panther," Etc.

She weighed one hundred and thirty-six pounds. You can easily arrive at her weight in gold dollars. The man in the story who does the assaying finds that her worth is not to be estimated in that way. A grim story of vengeance from the arid lands of the Southwest

THE camp in the Panamint Range might have been mistaken, from its spread of canvas, for regimental quarters. There was a dining tent and a drawing-room tent; there was a tent for the ladies and a tent for the gentlemen; a tent for maid-servants, a tent for manservants, and a tent for the guides; also a laundry tent, a cook tent, a horse tent, and a dog tent. The commissary was equally complete, and each day No. 24 put off at Yucca Siding, five miles away, a ton of ice, crates of milk, cream, vegetables, fish, lobsters, and porterhouse steaks—a two-horse wagonload in all.

No. 24, it may be remarked, was a transcontinental train, four days from San Francisco to New York, which all the inhabitants of Inyo County, waving all their handkerchiefs, could no more have stopped at Yucca Siding than a tumbleweed can stop a cyclone. But Janet Sutherland, of New York City, was providing an outing for a dozen and a half of her young friends —most of them of Knickerbocker lineage—and Janet's father held a controlling interest in the A. & P. Railroad.

All of which will help one to understand why the guides, Henry, and "Redtop," and "Mex," employed at five dollars per diem, smiled sardonically every time their eyes fell upon the sign "Camp Hardscrabble," painted by a rising young artist who was heir apparent to forty millions, wore a twelve-dollar silk shirt, twenty-dollar hunting boots, and carried a gold-mounted, three-hundred-dollar rifle of thirty-thirty caliber, with which he occasionally potted a grouse from a spruce limb, after venturing as far as a mile or a mile and a half from camp.

Yet Janet herself, after crossing a continent to elude civilization, was by no means satisfied with this make-believe roughing it. Hence, one morning, two hours before a scullion or a stable-boy had stirred, she rode off with a guide toward the misty gray peaks of the Three Brothers.

"If I bag a mountain sheep," she observed to Mex, glancing at her little twenty-eight Ross, "you shall have ten days' pay for one day's work."

"Thankee," answered Mex, without any visible agitation over the prospect, and surreptitiously ejecting an exhausted quid of tobacco on the off side of his pony.

At a fork in the trial he said: "I reckon we better separate so as to take in both sides of this hyer spur. Wait fer me where the road turns sharp to the left, about two miles ahead. Keep your eye peeled up the slope fer sheep,

but don't shoot at none, 'cause they'll be out of range. Wait till we double back along the spine of the ridge."

"This rifle of mine will shoot farther than you think," she answered severely. "It has a point-blank range of three hundred yards."

"Yes, ma'am. Still——"

"And by elevating the rear sight, it has a killing range of seven or eight hundred yards."

"No doubt. Still it would be better to do as I say if you want a sheep."

"Very well," she assented shortly.

Nevertheless, the guide was no sooner out of sight than she unslung her rifle with a determined air, and laid it across her saddle. When your father is worth a hundred millions, it is hard to believe in the omniscience of a man who smells of sweat.

She saw no sheep, but when she reached the turn in the trail she was rather startled to find a stranger on horseback waiting there—a youngish man dressed much like Mex, but considerably better looking.

"I'll tote your pea shooter," he observed pleasantly, and swept it into the hollow of his arm almost before she was aware of his intentions. "You'll need both hands in ridin' up the cañon."

"I'm not going up the cañon," she retorted sharply. "I'm to wait here for my guide. You have evidently made a mistake."

"You're Miss Sutherland, ain't you?"

"I am."

"Then you're the lady I come fer," he answered, his teeth gleaming humorously under his sunburned mustache.

"But why should you come for me? Who sent you?"

"Ride on, and I'll explain."

"I prefer that you explain first," she answered haughtily.

His gray eyes, which might have been blue before their bleaching by the ardent Southwestern sun, narrowed slightly. "All right. Consider yourself my prisoner."

She flushed angrily. "I suppose this is a cowboy joke. But I warn you that it will prove an expensive one in the end."

"Quite likely—fer your father."

He spoke softly, yet the subtle threat in his voice blanched her cheeks. "Do you mean—do you mean that you are going to hold me for a ransom?"

"That's the calculation, Miss Sutherland. Now ride on, please, and bear in mind that if you make a dash for liberty I can rope you within forty feet—which I'd hate to do with a lady. Also, if we meet any one, you're to say 'howdy' and nothin' more."

"Suppose I should say more?" she asked, with returning spirits.

"You've heerd, I reckon, that dead men tell no tales."

She eyed him shrinkingly. "Would you kill a man?"

"I have," he answered calmly.

II.

A five hours' ride brought them to a cabin tucked away in a grove of mighty spruces, on the backbone of the range. Pointing eastward, through a gap between two peaks, Janet's captor directed her attention to what resembled a handful of white pebbles lying on a patch of lawn.

"Camp Hardscrabble," he observed. "You ain't so far from home, after all; only about twenty mile as the crow flies."

Janet looked a moment; then, yielding to fatigue and nervous strain, she flung herself upon the thick brown carpet of needles and began to sob.

She lay thus for a long time. When she rose to a sitting posture, and removed her jaunty panama hat with its broad blue band, and combed her crumpled hair with her fingers, and touched her handkerchief to her swollen eyes,

the horses had disappeared, a pleasant aroma floated to her nostrils from the cabin door, and her captor sat on a stump, quietly smoking a cigarette.

"Dinner is ready whenever you aire," he said kindly. "If you keer to wash, thar's a fresh bucket of water from the spring."

When they were seated vis-à-vis at a table made from a packing case, with canned corn, smoking mountain trout, crackers, and coffee between them, the man continued:

"I hope you won't feel bad no more. Your cryin' sort of upsot me. It 'minded me of my sister Lucy—back home—years ago. She was layin' under an apple tree in the tall orchard grass, and the petals were drappin' down on her black hair like snow. I thought she meant to lay thar till she was buried, like the babes in the woods. I was only ten."

Janet surveyed his face with interest. "What was *her* trouble?" she asked, in a voice still reminiscent of tears.

"Pappy had just told her he was a bankrupt, and that she couldn't go away to college, like she was plannin' to do that fall."

Silence followed. A chickaree landed upon the clapboard roof with a thud, and set up a scratching with his sharp claws. When the meal was finished, the man cleared the table, and washed and dried the thick earthenware dishes with machinelike speed, artistically concluding the performance by whirling the towel like a lariat and looping it neatly around a peg in the wall, at a distance of six feet.

"Now I'll tell you some more about my family, as it has a bearin' on this kidnapin' business," said he, filling a cob pipe. "But first let me give you a handle to myse'f, so as we can get on friendly and informal." His eyes twinkled. "Call me Boxer, without no mister. Tain't my name, of course, but the boys used to call me that when I was a little tad; 'count of my handiness with my knucks, and it'll sound sort o' natural."

He puffed reflectively for a moment, as if arranging his tale.

"Back home, in old Kentuck, pappy run an oil and paint store, with a side line of glass, putty, wall paper, and sich. But oil was his main holt—kerosene and gasoline. In them days—the airly eighties—everybody burned kerosene lamps in our town, and a good many used gasoline stoves in the summertime.

"Pappy was makin' money—as money went in them days, back in Clay Center. We owned our home, and kept a hoss and jagger wagon, as they called it—a kind of surrey with fringe around the top and a foldin' seat down in front where me and brother Tom used to set and git switched in the face by old Top's tail. Pappy allus liked to drive out into the country on a Sunday afternoon, and take our supper along, and eat it on the river bank, and then gether pawpaws, or hickory nuts, or persimmons."

He paused with dreamy, vision-filled eyes, abstractedly tamping his tobacco with a fireproof forefinger. "I ain't et a persimmon in thutty years, I reckon," he mused, more to himself than his listener.

"Well, one day some laborers begin to dig along the side of the railroad track, not far from the depot. A few days later two big iron tanks was unloaded from a flat car and set up. On their sides was painted 'Universal Oil Company.'"

Janet lifted a pair of interested eyes at the mention of this name.

"About a week later," continued Boxer, in the same even tone, "a big tank wagon, drawed by two hosses and bearin' the same sign, drove up Main Street, and then made the rounds of the town. That day oil fell two cents a gallon in Clay Center, and I remember

well that mammy had red eyes at the supper table, and that pappy, after sayin' grace, set there without eatin' none.

"He knowed he was doomed. The wholesale price of oil hadn't fell none, y'unnerstand. Why should it, when pappy was buyin' from the Universal itself, and the Universal had decided to freeze him out, and hog the retail profit too? But, y'unnerstand, pappy didn't know he was buyin' from the Universal. The company he bought from went under another name, and nachally pappy, like everybody else, thought it was an independent company.

"He knowed he was doomed, and he ought to have quit, I reckon. Still, tain't easy fer a man past the prime of life to quit one business, and go into another. Then, too, he wa'n't the quittin' kind, soft-spoken as he allus was. So he fought. He met the cut. The Universal cut ag'in, and still ag'in, till oil was sellin' at seven cents, less'n what it cost pappy."

III.

His lips suddenly trembled.

"Miss Sutherland, I ain't goin' to dwell on this story. It don't do me no good. Somethin' inside of me swells up and specks fly before my eyes. But when pappy was down and out—home gone, store gone, everything gone except two hunnerd dollars that old Top and the jagger wagon brung at auction—oil went up two cents higher in Clay Center than it was when the Universal made their first cut.

"We moved over to southern Illinois—into Egypt, as they call it. All of us went to work, even me, not yet eleven. Then we moved acrost to Missouri. Then pappy homesteaded it in Kansas. We had one year of drouth, and two years of grasshoppers. Mammy died—worked to death. Brother Tom was shot in a qua'r'l. Lucy, she run off with—she married a scamp that played in a circus band. Pappy said he'd sooner have laid her in the grave. Then come a cyclone one day in March that blowed our house into the cellar. Pappy was killed, and I war the on'y one left.

"I hit the Southwest. I done honest work at first. I rode range. I prospected. Then—and it's allus been a curus thing to me—I went to hell. I rustled cattle, robbed stagecoaches and trains, blowed banks. . . . The p'int is this, and, of course, you've seen it comin': Your pappy was State manager of the Universal in Kentucky at that time. Later he was fourth vice president for the whole works, then second, then third, and now he's president. I been keepin' up with him in the newspapers.

"He done his dirty work well, and he got his reward. You 'peared shocked this mawnin' when I told you I'd killed a man. I don't mind confessin' that I've killed more'n one. But your pappy's done wuss'n that. He's killed women and children, as well as men. He made some of 'em blow their brains out; he made others drink theirselves to death. Some died of a broken heart. Others starved, if the truth was knowed.

"And that ain't all. He bribed judges and congressmen, and others. He destroyed souls as well as bodies. It's true as gospel. Everybody knows it, and if it ain't recorded agin' him on God A'mighty's tablets above, it's because there aire no God."

The girl—own child of her intrepid father—heard him through with scarcely a chance of her beautiful face. At the end of his terrific indictment, she gazed through the open door into distant space for a moment. When she finally spoke her voice was marvelously sweet and low.

"I believe your story, Boxer. I know there's much injustice in the world. I know that business too often resembles war. I know that the Universal Oil Company is hated by tens and hundreds

of thousands of people. I know that my father has been lampooned, denounced, even cursed, by almost every newspaper in the land, by politicians, reformers, clergymen—men of every class.

"But he is not the devil you think him. He was only one of many who determined the policy of his company; and none of the many, I fancy, foresaw such a result of their policy as was exemplified in your father's case. However, that is a debatable question, and I'll lay it aside. But let me ask you this: Is it a fair, a manly thing to punish me for my father's sins?"

He took a puff or two before answering: "I'm not punishin' you. I ain't aimin' to harm a hair of your head."

"But you are punishing me. I suffer because my father suffers, not knowing what has befallen me."

"Then you must suffer," answered Boxer firmly. "But far as that goes, he'll soon know what has befallen you." Stepping to the table, after securing a sheet of paper and a pencil, he asked: "How much do you weigh?"

"One hundred and thirty-six pounds."

"You're right plump. Always had plenty to eat, I reckon." He busied himself with the pencil for seven minutes. "Now I figger that a girl like you ought to be wuth her weight in gold. A pound avoirdupois is seven thousand grains, accordin' to the Jews I used to sell my gold dust to. One hundred and thirty-six pounds aire nine hundred and fifty-two thousand grains. A gold dollar weighs twenty-five and eight-tenths grains. Dividin' one into t'other we git, as your vally, thirty-six thousand eight hundred and ninety-nine dollars and twenty-two cents. Call it thirty-seven thousand dollars in round numbers."

He smiled, reached for a fresh sheet of paper, and wrote:

DEAR MR. SUTHERLAND: I have your doughter. Her price is $37,000. Bring it in $10 gold pieces. Foller the Little Brother trale to Hutchins camp. Go west till you strike Injun Nose Rock. 200 yards due north is a stick with a piece of paper which says Here. Bury the money there. Cover the fresh dirt with pine needles. Keep it secret from everybody but your trusted friends. Don't post no officers or detectives to try to ketch me. Play fair with me, and I'll play fair with you. BOXER.

"I don't object to your addin' a postscript to set your pappy's mind at ease," said he, after reading the missive to her.

She took paper and pencil, and, after a moment's thought, wrote:

I am in good hands, father. My captor is a gentleman. I am writing this under no duress, and I think it would be better for you to pay the ransom than to invoke the aid of the law.

Boxer grinned at her characterization of him as a gentleman.

"You might have tacked on that I'm a college graduate, and bathe in wild goats' milk every day to presarve my delicate skin. Howsomever, your pap'll probably take that fer granted. Now I'm goin' down to Camp Hardscrabble to tie this letter to the flap of his tent. I'll have to lay low till everybody is asleep, so I won't be back till mawnin'. Don't try to run away. You'd on'y get lost and starve to death. You'll find plenty to eat hyer. The spring's straight down the hill about two hunnerd feet."

"Suppose somebody comes along who will show me the way back?" she asked daringly.

"Nobody'll come—leastways, nobody you'd care to go off with," he added significantly. "This is Hell's Hilltop, and a lonesome place fer honest men. Bar the door to-night, and sleep with your rifle handy. If I git back before sunup, I'll th'ow myself down somers outside."

IV.

Janet spent most of the afternoon on a flat-topped bowlder which overlooked an area far greater than many a king-

dom celebrated in song and story. No bird called; no living thing, with the exception of a pair of bickering red squirrels, passed within her purview. The sun blazed from a cloudless, turquoise sky, though it was delightfully cool in the shade; and the wind hummed through the tall conifers, as she had once heard it hum through the shrouds of a tramp ship in the Indian Ocean.

So far from being lonesome or afraid, a joyous exhilaration pervaded her veins. Indeed, in all her quests for excitement and adventure, in the far and strange places of earth, she had experienced nothing quite like this. This was real; the other was make-believe. Yet she would have escaped, braving the danger of starvation; but after wandering in every direction as far as she dared from camp, she found no trace of her horse, and to flee on foot would have been madness.

For supper, she opened a can of salmon and a box of crackers. Afterward, she inspected the bunk in which she was to sleep. It was not inviting. There were no sheets or pillows, and dried moss served as a mattress. However, she arranged the cotton blankets gingerly, and then stepped outside again to watch the glorious sunset.

One by one, the western peaks lost their blazing, crimson edgings; the intervening valleys merged from blue to purple, from purple to black. The silhouetted trees gradually blurred and ran together, like splotches of ink on a blotting pad. She reëntered the cabin, and secured the door with its heavy bar of wood. She drew off her leggings, shoes, and stockings, her short khaki skirt, waist, and corset, and then paused beside the bunk with its masculine associations.

Once, when she was a very little girl, and lived in a small, plain house, in a small, plain town, she knelt at her bedside every night, with her mother's hand upon her tawny head. Just when she had discontinued this habit—the mother's hand having grown cold and still—she could not remember. But now, half afraid in her remoteness and the dark, she knelt and murmured:

> Now I lay me down to sleep;
> I pray the Lord my soul to keep.
> If I should die before I wake,
> I pray the Lord my soul to take.

A moment of waiting, and peace, like a benison, descended upon her. She climbed into the bunk, drew the blanket up to her chin, and fell into a dreamless sleep.

When she awoke, the sun was streaming through the little four-light window upon her pillow. Her watch marked ten minutes after five. She rose, dressed, and passed out into an atmosphere that was as invigorating as a shower bath. A few rods distant Boxer's horse lay on the ground, and just beyond it, with his face pillowed on his arms, lay Boxer himself.

She slipped down to the spring for water, built a fire in the little sheet-iron camp stove, measured out the coffee with Napoleonic faith in her ability to make a potable brew, set a dozen slices of bacon to simmering, and mixed up a bowl of batter for flapjacks. Then, her face rosily flushed over this little culinary venture, she wakened Boxer.

He stared at the waiting breakfast.

"I overslept," said he sheepishly. "Tain't my intention fer you to do the cookin'. All you got to do is to set still, and draw your weight in gold. But I'll say this: that Javy has got the right aromy—and I've b'iled enough of it in my time to float a ship."

He helped her wash the dishes, and then lugged in a huge bundle done up in a sheet.

"I stripped one of the camp clothes-lines," he explained. "I knowed you'd relish some fresh duds. It was ruther dark, and I didn't dast strike a light, and as I never picked out a female outfit before, some of the pieces may be a

little off. But there's quite a selection, and if you have to do any makin' over you'll find shears, and needles, and thread in the cupboard thar."

He looked as pleased as a boy over his feat, and she answered, with a laugh: "It is seldom that a gentleman has the privilege of selecting a lady's wardrobe—especially without regard to expense."

V.

The days which followed were lonely ones for the girl, Boxer scouting most of the time, and she indulged in several little cries. She had just finished one of these, on the afternoon of the third day, when Boxer unexpectedly reappeared, after an absence of only three hours.

"We'll move on to-night," he announced grimly.

"Move on!" she exclaimed in dismay.

"Yes. Your pappy has called a posse out. He dies hard. So do I."

"But where shall we move to?"

"Just on," he returned enigmatically.

In a surprisingly short time, he led three horses up to the door—his and her mounts, and a pack horse which he seemed to have conjured out of the ground. He loaded the last with the swift, deft hands of the veteran plainsman, and they set off at dusk.

"Remember," he admonished, in a voice less kindly than usual, "if we meet anybody, and you call for help, you sign their death warrant. It don't make any difference how many there aire. I'll die ruther than go to jail, and I'll die shootin'." At her reproachful face, he added: "I'd ruther not, of course, jest as your pappy would probably ruther not ruin a man—if he could have his way without it."

There followed for Janet, not days and nights, nor any natural divisions of time, but rides, sleeps, meals, at dawn or at dusk, midday, or midnight, depending upon the heat, the possible presence of man, the condition of their horses, and, after they had descended to the desert, the distance from water to water. But at last they approached a low range of mountains sitting on the level sand like an island in the sea.

"How long has it been?" asked Janet wearily.

"Five days. Now you kin have a good rest."

"But father can never communicate with you here. You'll never know whether he has buried the gold for you or not."

"I'll know in time."

"But when?"

"In time. I ain't takin' no more chances with your pappy."

Her sweet, short, upper lip quivered. "You are a hard man, Boxer."

"Yessum. And whenever I feel I'm softenin' up, I think of mammy, and sister Lucy, and the rest."

In the lap of the Los Altos were wood and water, mule deer, Gambrel's quail and dusky grouse, the last so tame that one could almost bag them with a stick. It was wonderfully pleasant and exhilarating to sleep on a bed of fragrant, springy conifer boughs, with no other canopy than the star-studded sky. Yet, on the second day, Boxer began to fell trees for a hut.

"You're not planning to stay here all winter?" asked Janet, aghast.

"No'm. But this is the twenty-third of September, and it might snow tomorrow."

"Father must have withdrawn the posse, and deposited the gold by this time, Boxer. Let's go and see," she pleaded.

She made a touching picture, in all her beauty and innocence—so touching that Boxer quickly averted his eyes.

"I'm takin' no chances," said he. "Your pappy don't cave easy. Why, I've heerd that fifty thousand men that he'd ruined one way or another banded together to pray for his death, mawnin',

noon, and night, and that he jest laughed at 'em."

"Were you one of them?" she asked sarcastically.

"Not me. I believe the Lord he'ps them that he'p theirselves, and that a man's good right arm aire the best prayer he kin put up."

"But you weren't in a position to put yours up, so you should have prayed."

"I put it up some. I decided to shoot him. Every time I seen in the papers that he was out West hyer lookin' over the Taliaferro Dam or the big causeway fer his railroad acrost Arrapahoe Sea, I hiked down thataway. I seen him a good many times, but I only got one good chance to plug him without trappin' myself. Then my hammer fell on a bad primer."

"Aren't you glad now that it did?" she asked, with glistening eyes.

He paused in his work of lopping branches from a young spruce, and mopped his face with his handkerchief.

"In a way, yessum. I didn't know you, then, fer one thing. I don't suppose I'd have the heart to draw a bead on him now."

He was actually embarrassed. Janet smiled. It was difficult to believe that this simple-hearted, childlike man was an outlaw, a killer; or, believing it, it was difficult to hold him in horror. He was more like an unconscious, elemental instrument of destruction, such as wind, frost, fire.

"Your faith in my father is small," said she, "but I wonder if you would trust me."

"I would, Miss Sutherland."

"Suppose, then, that you take me back to Camp Hardscrabble. I pledge you my word that the ransom shall be paid. I will send it to you at any point you indicate, by express, in gold. Not another soul on earth but you and me shall be in the secret, so that your liberty shall not be jeopardized in the least."

He cogitated for some time.

"I don't want *your* money," he finally answered. "I want your pappy's. I want to squeeze him."

"It will be his money. All that I have is his, in a way, of course. But this shall be money that otherwise would not be mine. For instance, when I want two thousand dollars, we'll say, for clothes, or a party, or a new automobile, or a trip to Europe, I'll ask him for three thousand, and express you the difference. It will take me some time, maybe several years, but in the end you shall have every cent of the thirty-seven thousand."

"You never give a party that cost two thousand dollars, did you?" he asked incredulously.

It was now her turn to avert her eyes. "Only a very large party would cost that much."

Boxer's eyes filmed with thought. "Miss Sutherland, that is more money than my pappy ever made in any year of his life—twice as much, I reckon. And yet your pappy wanted my pappy's little business—and got it. I'll think it over."

VI.

At an open fire, built between two slabs of rock, Janet was boiling coffee, and baking a hoe cake for dinner. At regular intervals the crash of a tree, slaughtered by Boxer's ax, came to her ears. But finally there ensued a silence so protracted as to excite her alarm, and, running up the slope, she found Boxer stretched on the ground, with arms outflung and eyes closed. At first she thought him dead, but a dash of cold water in the face revived him.

"Tree hit me hyer!" he said thickly, laying his hand on his chest.

For a moment Janet's heart failed her. Her knees shook. Like one in supplication, she lifted her eyes to the cold, white peaks in the distance. Their majestic calm seemed to mock her. But

presently a share of their calm was vouchsafed her, and, passing her arms under Boxer's shoulders, she half carried, half dragged him back to camp, and laid him on her own bed of boughs. Upon unbuttoning his flannel shirt and exposing his corded, muscular chest, she found no breach of the skin—only a slight contusion; but when she gently passed her fingers over the spot, he moaned with pain.

Stern enough, in truth, was the reality which confronted the girl; yet she moved about like one in the thraldom of a dream. Was it a flesh-and-blood Janet Sutherland, or only her unleashed, wandering spirit, who was thus marooned a five days' journey from her kind? Was it fact or only fevered fancy that she, child of fortune, unaccustomed to hooking her gown or combing her hair, was now to carry water and firewood, cook, provide shelter in case of storm, care for the horses, and nurse this rude son of the West back to health—or perchance return his clay to Mother Earth?

Boxer was delirious all night, now loading, in imagination, the ransom gold upon a pack horse, while holding a posse at bay, now flinging it by handfuls upon the roulette table. At dawn, however, he fell asleep, and did not wake until noon. Though dull-eyed, he seemed rational.

"We'll move on to-day," were his first words.

"Move on!" cried the startled girl. "It would be your death. You are in no condition to ride. Why should we move on?"

"I've changed my plans. We'll move east. It's only a two days' ride to San Fernando."

"Why go to San Fernando?"

"I've got my reasons," he answered stubbornly.

"Very well. I am in your hands. But why such haste? Why not wait until you are a little stronger?"

He stared for an interval into the burnished vault with eyes as gray and dry as desert sand itself. Then he suddenly burst into tears.

"That's the p'int, Miss Sutherland. I'll never be no stronger. That tree give me my finishin' touch."

Janet, her own eyes wet, took his hand. "I'm so sorry, Boxer!"

"It's not that I'm afeerd to die," he assured her quickly. "Ag'in and ag'in when me and the boys rode off to hold up a train, or loot a bank, or rustle a bunch of cattle, I've said to myself: 'It'll come to-night,' meanin' death. But I didn't keer. And it was the same with the other boys. I've seen a good many of 'em pass over, and nary one was afeerd to die. Dyin' is easy enough 'fer a feller who's gambled with death a thousand times. But it's this way," he added huskily. "If I die hyer, you never kin find your way out. You'll die, too."

He watched her fearfully, but she showed no perturbation. Instead, she answered quietly: "I fought that all out last night. I, too, am not afraid to die, if such is God's will. But I believe we'll both stand a better chance of getting out alive if you give yourself a couple of days for recuperation."

He tapped his chest. "Put your ear thar, and listen to that gurglin'. You hear it? I figger there's jest so many of them gurgles left in me, like a clock that's running down. Tain't pleasant fer any one to think of, 'specially a lady. Yet you'd best know the truth. So we'll start to-day. And if I do peter out on the road, mebbe we can git fer enough fer you to go the rest of the way alone."

She disputed the point no further, for the present, and he wearily closed his eyes.

"I'm sorry I kidnaped you, Miss Sutherland," he continued presently. "Pappy always used to say 'Never try to git even with nobody, son. You'll

be happier in the end.' I know now he was right. He was a gentle kind of man, pappy was. So was mammy. I don't know where the devil in me come from. Mebbe I got it out hyer. Out hyer gentleness don't seem much in fashion. Even the climate ain't gentle. It burns you by day, and freezes you by night. In the desert it dribbles down a few hot drops 'stid of rain, and in the mountains a cloudbu'st is liable to drown you. Men aire the same. They'd cut your throat fer a dime. Still, I must say I've knowed others that would give you their last dime if you needed it wuss'n they."

VII.

They made ready in the cool of the evening. Yet cool as it was the sweat poured from Boxer's face as he adjusted the diamond hitch over the pack horse's load. Janet helped him into the saddle, at which kindly office he flushed like a girl. Then, after a final glance at the heap of abandoned impedimenta, including most of their food, they turned their animals' heads toward the high, broken interior of the oasis.

The going in the beginning was rough, being up a bowlder-strewn arroyo, mostly dry but knee-deep in places with water. Boxer swayed dizzily as he rode, and at the end of the second hour suddenly wilted on to the neck of his pony. That intelligent animal halted instantly. Janet, leaping from her horse, was quickly at his side, but only the rope with which he had secretly secured himself saved him from a fall. Yet he fumbled for his flask, took a drink, and presently assumed an erect position again.

"Don't attach no importance to a little accident like this," he pleaded, of the distressed young woman. "I don't know how I come to turn sich a faintin' trick, because I was feelin' as pert as a chipmunk a minute before. I lay it to that old bullet wound in my hip. What do you say to restin' hyer till the moon comes up? She's due in an hour, and I never knew her to be behind time." He forced a smile at his little joke.

"Which is a high compliment for one of the feminine gender," answered Janet. "But, oh, dear, I do wish we had waited a day or two!"

"Pshaw! I'll be all right as soon as I git used to the motion. I was just a little dizzy-headed. I feel a heap better now. In fact, I believe I'll have a smoke."

The trembling fingers with which he rolled a cigarette belied his words. Yet his persistent pleasantry finally lulled Janet's fears, and when the moon thrust her great, blood-red disk above the tapering firs, she tactfully allowed him to mount unaided. He was not yet steady in the saddle, but he betrayed no more signs of fainting.

They crossed the backbone of the range, descended the eastern slope, and about two o'clock in the morning reached the edge of the desert again. Under the half light of the moon, the desert presented a vague, shadowy, limitless expanse, with only one little butte dimly discernible in the foreground.

"We'll camp hyer till sunup," said the man. "We'll give the stock their fill of water before we start. We ought to reach Custer's Tank by noon. The guv'ment map calls it Rusty Hatchet Water Hole Number Three. Rusty Hatchet is a river, but it don't work at the job more'n three months in the year. The rest of the time it simmers down to a string of water holes. Sometimes even they peter out."

"Is there any danger of this one being petered out now?" she asked.

"Oh, no," he answered promptly, but avoided meeting her eyes; for Number Three had the reputation of being a capricious wench.

"Even if it should be," she continued cheerfully, "I suppose our can-

teens would hold out. San Fernando can't be much more than thirty-six hours from here—can it?"

"In that neighborhood, dependin' some'at on your hossflesh, of course."

She emitted a little cry of dismay. "Oh, I forgot that the horses must drink, too."

"Not as much as you'd think," he returned with tranquil mendacity, resolved that the arch fiend of the desert, Thirst, should not terrorize and unnerve her by anticipation. "A good cow pony can go quite a spell without water. In fact, I've knowed ponies that I'd back agin' a camel in a drouth match. Far as that goes, that pony of mine right thar is no slouch. The damp in a handful of manzanita leaves would steam him for ten miles. So you needn't worry about the hosses."

She was not conscious of worrying, yet she did not close her eyes during the two hours' halt. A peculiar, subconscious excitement pricked her into wakefulness. Lying on her back, she gazed steadily into the star-spangled sky—a sky in which the stars seemed to flare and flicker and roar as if fanned by a cosmic gale.

She caught the first gray light of dawn in the east, followed by primrose, yellow, orange, and, finally, flaming red. She watched the mounds of black hematite stalk stealthily into view, like an advancing host. Lastly, there was presented to her eyes a chain of snow-capped mountains in the northeast, apparently an hour's canter distant, but in reality over a hundred miles. Then she heard Boxer's voice, from down where the horses were tethered: "Time to git up, Miss Sutherland!"

After a hasty breakfast of bacon and black, unsweetened coffee, they embarked upon the level sands as one embarks upon the waters of the sea. There was no sign of a trail, but Boxer, steering by the mountains, laid his course without hesitation.

It led them through open, straggling "forests" of weird, distorted Joshua trees; through thickets of mesquite, ironwood, and the wicked "catclaw," sometimes higher than their heads; past clumps of ocatilla, with their sinister, flaring, crimson flowers, so out of place upon the dull, dun landscape. Occasionally a giant cactus, curiously imitating a huge candelabrum, rose upon the horizon; again it was a desiccated, almost leafless paloverde tree, casting scarcely enough shade to disturb the sun-loving chuckwallas and horned toads.

Yet, in spite of this vegetation, they never for a moment forgot that they were tresspassers upon the domain of death, where water was forever at a premium, the object of a fierce and ceaseless struggle. Indeed, the plants themselves were but the ghosts of plants, sacrificing grace and charm to grotesque adaptations for the conservation of the scant moisture which their wide-spreading root systems gleaned from the ground.

The only animal life was reptilian. No wing flashed amid the thickets. The shadow of no soaring bird crossed their path. On the contrary, the whitened skulls and ribs of horses and oxen along the way were a constant and grisly reminder that others before them had assaulted the desert and suffered repulse. Half-buried canteens, rifles, blankets, and tins of food were the dumb but eloquent witnesses of failing strength, and the desperation of despair.

"If I was you, Miss Sutherland, I'd go sort of easy on that water," said Boxer, with evident embarrassment, when Janet put her canteen to her lips for the third time in less than two hours. "It might give you a kind of sun colic."

"Nonsense! It's as pure as dew!" she exclaimed.

But her laugh died when, glancing at his face and piercing his simple arti-

fice, she suspected for the first time that water might prove scarce before their journey's end. Fear contracted her heart. But quickly, observing the man, sick yet unafraid, looking the grim scene squarely in the face, she caught an emanation of his courage as tinder catches the spark from flint.

By eight o'clock the sun beat upon them like a great burning glass. By ten o'clock Janet felt as if an iron band encircled her head, and she could feel her throbbing pulse in her temples. Yet it was not until they crossed an outcropping of alkaline dust, which arose in choking clouds, that she again resorted to her canteen. Then it was only to dampen her dry mouth.

"You haven't taken a drink yet," she observed reproachfully. "I know you must be thirsty."

"I'm desert bred," he answered, with a smile. But his face showed red through its leathern, weather-beaten integument, and his eyes were glassy bright.

"Have you fever? Let me feel your pulse."

He shook his head waggishly. "You couldn't tell nothin' by that. I've got what they call a nervous pulse. Never could bear anybody to tech it. It's as steady as a clock now, but if you should lay your finger on it, more'n likely it would cut up all kinds of didos."

"Let me feel your hand, then."

"Somebody might think you was flirtin' with me."

"Please!"

He rode nearer and extended a small, hard, muscular hand. It was as hot as a biscuit.

"You have fever, Boxer!"

"A mite, mebbe. My hands aire allus more or less hot. Why, when I was a baby——"

"Take a drink of water," she commanded.

"Pshaw! Don't you suppose——"

"Are you saving it? If you are, I shall save mine, too."

"What put that in your head? I ain't wastin' it, of course. But I will waste a little just to prove I ain't savin' it." He raised his canteen to his lips, and held it there for perhaps ten seconds.

"You swallowed just twice!" declared Janet accusingly.

"I let it run down my throat without swallerin'," he protested. "That's a trick I learnt when I was a boy. I've seen lots of fellers who could do it with whisky."

VIII.

It was not noon, as Boxer had optimistically predicted, but nearly four o'clock when the pair drew up at the brink of Rusty Hatchet Cañon, and gazed silently and solemnly down into the great gash in the earth, with its particolored, bastioned walls, its buttes, and pinnacles of limestone stained red with iron, its chaotic jumble of mighty bowlders—as soundless, as desolate, as forbidding as a dead planet.

"Now we'll ride down to the tank," said Boxer uneasily. "I'll go first, old Bluey next, and you last. Don't try to guide your hoss. Leave the reins slack, and he'll take care of hisself and you, too."

The descent was rather trying to Janet's nerves, but the bottom was reached without mishap. By this time Boxer was a hundred yards ahead, out on the level, sandy bed of the now waterless river. He paused until Janet came up with him.

"The hole is dry," said he briefly.

"Where is it?"

He pointed to an insignificant depression with walls and bottom of black gneiss. Janet stared incredulously. She had pictured a deep pool, with trickling, moss-covered rocks above, and possibly columbines nodding at their reflection in the glassy surface be-

low. Quite unexpectedly, she burst into tears.

"Don't cry," said he. "I was afeerd all the time she would play us a trick. But she don't knock no holes in my plans."

"You mean we shall go on to number two or four?"

"Well, no, seein' as one is about forty miles south, and t'other an ekal distance north. But there's oodles of nigger-head cactus 'tween here and Fernando. Plenty of water in them. So don't you worry. Meanwhile, we'll camp in the shade of that butte, and git about four hours' sleep. The trail up the other side of the cañon is as easy as a cow path, and we can make it by moonlight."

After a supper of cold canned corn—there was no fuel for a fire—they tethered the horses, and lay down on their blankets, Boxer, as usual, keeping his distance. It was not hot in the shade, and Janet, exhausted, instantly fell asleep.

She awoke almost as suddenly, her eyes seeming to pop open. Moonlight filled the cañon, obliterating its barbaric red, and blues, and greens, and softening its jagged outlines. Yet it was more ghastly than by sunlight, more like some dread stage in the natal hour of earth, before God had tamed it, and made it a fit habitation for man.

The horses, though suffering from thirst, stood as motionless as if turned to stone by some evil genie of the night. But between them and Janet, flat on the ground, was an object which stealthily wriggled in her direction. It moved like a great reptile, but Janet presently recognized it as a man, as Boxer. Her heart quickened. Of his integrity she felt perfectly sure; but the horrible thought crossed her mind that he, to save her from a worse death by thirst, was coming to give her the coup de grâce.

If so, she was willing to die. She did not move, but watched him with fascinated eyes until he was only a few feet away. He fumbled for something at his side. But it was his canteen, not his revolver, which gleamed in the moonlight. With his free hand he reached for her canteen, unscrewed the top, transferred a part of the contents of his own to it, rescrewed the top, and then noiselessly crept away. The girl's eyes were wet with scalding tears.

Half an hour later Boxer boldly approached to awaken her.

"How many cans of tomaters did you put in, Miss Sutherland?" he asked casually, fumbling at the pack.

"Six."

He drew out one can, cut a cross in the lid with two deft blows of his hatchet, dumped the contents into his wool hat, and held it under the nose of his horse, which greedily sucked up the watery mess. Janet's pony was fed likewise, but the pack horse got none. Such food as he carried was transferred to the saddlebags of the other two ponies; most of the remaining articles were left upon the ground.

"You ride on a little piece," said Boxer, "and when you hear a shot don't be scared or look back."

She emitted a little shivering cry of pity.

"But if there are plenty of nigger-head cactuses ahead, Boxer——"

"He'd never reach 'em. He's done fer."

"But maybe a can of tomatoes——"

"I dassent take no chances."

She rode on. The report of Boxer's forty-five crashed among the salients of the wall, echo on echo, until multiplied a hundredfold; then the grisly, tomblike, oppressive silence settled down again over all, until she heard the creak of saddle leather behind her.

"Poor pony!" she murmured sorrowfully.

"Yessum. Still, they's wuss things fer a hoss than gittin' a bullet through his brain. Wanderin' around in this

vestibule of hell, with nothin' to eat or drink, aire one of 'em. Thar's wuss things fer a man, too, fer as that goes. I knowed a feller called Jeff once—don't recollect as I ever heerd his last name. Me and him was pards. He got shot. He took my hand and said: 'Good night, old scout,' though it was blindin' noon at the time. He said it jest like he'd said it a hunderd times before. Death was nothin' to him. He jest laughed at it. Yet he had a girl, up Laramie way, that went back on him, and——"

He ceased abruptly, and it was half a minute before he concluded with: "I reckon I won't bore you with that. P'int is this: Jeff was no namby-pamby; he never spoke of it once; yet, because he was sufferin' from that girl flirt's sting, he ackshally courted death."

"And death came that way—unnecessarily—because he courted it?" asked Janet, in a low voice.

"Yessum. He picked a fuss with a Mexican three-card-monte shark, and the Mexican drawed the quickest. I killed the Mexican the next day," he added, as an afterthought.

And Janet received it as such. The desert's paltry valuation of human life was becoming her own.

"What makes you so hoarse?" she asked.

"Night air, mebbe."

"Boxer, I wish you wouldn't lie to me in that way. This air is bone dry. What you need is water. Take a drink."

"I did—back yander—after fixin' Bluey. A good one, too. If you don't believe it, heft my canteen."

"Take another one."

He obeyed, with a whimpering chuckle, and said: "You're pretty cute, Miss Sutherland." Then he laughed louder, in a voice as raucous as a crow's, and rolled his head with merriment. Laughter of any kind in that ruthless place, where one might rather expect to hear the wails and groans of the damned, would have struck a discordant note; but there was a quality in Boxer's laughter which confirmed the girl's suspicions, and gave her a thrill. He was delirious.

Later, when they had topped the cañon rim, he sang bits of song—nursery rhymes, hymns, music-hall ballads. He told stories, especially about himself. Adopting a familiarity entirely foreign to his rational self, he joked about the manner in which he had held her father up. But at last his tongue flagged and grew still, so that he scarcely answered the questions she asked in order to keep in touch with his condition.

Hour after hour passed; mile after mile was left behind, slowly and wearily, for the ponies would not go faster than a walk. Occasionally one of them would stop, rest a few minutes with drooping head, and then voluntarily resume the journey.

In the moonlight all distant landmarks were invisible. Now and then a spectral butte sprang into view. Now and then the trail gradually dipped and as gradually rose again, marking, perhaps, the bed of an extinct salt lake; or it abruptly crossed a ridge, or crept up an arroyo, where the stones rattled under the horses' feet.

The girl wondered how Boxer steered his course. Finally, with a sudden coldness about her heart, it occurred to her that he was not steering at all. He rode with a bowed head, seeming to note nothing. His pony apparently had a free rein. Yet quite unexpectedly he said:

"It'll be sunup in an hour. We'll camp at Crossman's Folly. It's about four mile ahead."

"What is Crossman's Folly?"

"Jest a big rock that a feller named Crossman done somethin' to—I forgit what. Or, more likely, it done somethin' to him, desertlike. Anyhow, the rock's still thar, and Crossman ain't."

IX.

Upon reaching Crossman's, they tossed their blankets upon the ground, and let their weary forms follow. Neither was hungry, and neither spoke of being thirsty. The ponies needed no tether. Indeed, as if instinctively looking to their masters for salvation, they pushed up almost too close for Janet's comfort, with their forefeet on the edge of the blanket. But, after a glance at their swollen tongues, already beginning to protrude from their mouths, she had not the heart to make them move.

The eastern ball of fire once more leaped above the desert's rim. For a few minutes it masqueraded as the painter of a rosy dawn; but, quickly tossing this mask aside, it began its sinister work of superheating plain and cañon, butte, arroyo, and volcanic hillock until their rocky ribs cracked from expansion, and the hardy desert shrubs turned their coriaceous foliage edgewise to escape the pitiless bombardment.

Boxer slept the sleep of exhaustion, but Janet, with bloodshot, red-lidded eyes, stared at the mocking slopes of snow to the northward. At the appointed hour she shook her comrade until he awoke.

"Dogged if I didn't dream I was back on grandfather's farm," he observed groggily. "I'd gone down to the spring house, where the milk crocks were settin' waist-deep in the cold water, and was jest reachin' fer the drinkin' gourd when you brung me to."

He slowly and stiffly got on to his feet, took two cans of tomatoes from the saddlebags, and split them open for the ponies. Janet knew now that the niggerhead cactuses, with their life-saving fluid, were a myth.

"Funny how far a cayuse will travel on a can of tomaters," observed Boxer cheerfully. "We fellers out hyer on the plains kick a good deal 'cause the tomaters in a can aire as skass as oysters in a church sociable stew; but now and then, ketched out like this, we thank our stars the cans are mostly juice."

He paused, and looked about him with a speculative eye. "We'll leave our rifles hyer, our extry blankets, the hatchet, and all our grub except the two cans of tomaters, and one can of succotash. Every ounce counts now. I'll empty my canteen into your'n. I'll leave my saddle, too—it weighs close to sixty pounds."

"I'll ride bareback, too," said Janet valiantly.

"I'd ruther you wouldn't. It might stiffen you up some." He added reluctantly: "You see, we may have to walk a piece."

"Walk!" This possibility had not occurred to her. "How far?"

"Four or five mile, mebbe," he answered vaguely. "Depends on whether we find any niggerheads or not. A hoss will suck a niggerhead dry as quick as you or me. A hoss has sense."

"Tell me the truth, Boxer. I am not afraid. I want to share this great responsibility with you. Will it be more than five miles?"

"Well, since you put it thataway, it might. It might be ten mile. All depends on how long the pintos hold out. They may have more ginger left than a body would figger."

"How far have we to go yet, altogether?"

"Lemme see." He made a pretense of calculating, though she knew he could have named the distance offhand. "I'd say twenty or twenty-five mile."

"You are sure it's no more?"

"Gospel truth," he protested.

They had ridden Janet knew not how long or how far when her pony stopped, just as he had stopped many times before. But this time there was a difference—he did not start again. Boxer slapped him only twice with the flat of his hand.

"Done fer!" he pronounced briefly. "Take mine, and ride on a piece."

This time the shot which quickly followed stirred no emotion in Janet. Apathy, like a benumbing drug, was stealing over her, though she was not actually suffering from either hunger or thirst. To die seemed the most natural thing in the world. Life, in this dreadful place, was an intrusion, an impertinence. To lose it was like the spilling of a drop of water upon the burning sand. But of this she did not speak.

"Now, Boxer," said she, emulating his cheerfulness, "I'll ride fifteen minutes by the watch. Then you'll take your turn."

"Make it thirty minutes," said he hoarsely. "Climbin' on and off so often is hard on the hoss and us, too. I'll hang on to the stirrup strap."

"Very well. But remember this: we are no longer man and woman. We are just two Things, fighting for life. We stand equal. No more gallantry."

At the end of exactly thirty minutes by her watch she drew rein. "Your turn now."

"Keep on—make it forty-five minutes," pleaded Boxer. "I've caught my second wind. My boots aire thick. This sand would cook your feet. Besides, I seem to breathe better walkin'."

"You are lying again, Boxer. Let me down."

He clasped her knee desperately.

"Listen! Make it forty-five minutes. Then, if you say so, I'll ride an hour."

"I will if you will drain this canteen. Not otherwise."

He drained it—there were not over two ounces of tepid water left in it. But, after all, he had trapped her. Three minutes before her time was up the pony paused, breathing heavily, and sucking piteously at his black, swollen tongue. His small, trim hoofs, so swift over the grassy plain, so sure upon the mountain trail, so steady in desert sand, had taken their last step. Now he dumbly waited his master's last return for all his faithful service—a bullet in the brain.

This time Janet merely turned her back while Boxer released the poor brute from its misery. His eyes were wet as they trudged along.

"Tain't over jest killin' a hoss," he explained brokenly.

"I understand, Boxer," said she, taking his hand. "You and I are done for, as well as the pony."

"*I* am," he admitted. "I've knowed it all the time. But I hope—I have hoped you wasn't. You're such a beautiful woman, Miss Sutherland," he concluded reverently.

"Not now, Boxer. I glanced at myself in the lid of my watch, a while back."

"Yes, now," he insisted doggedly. "You're more beautiful now than you war. You make me think of an angel. God will never forgive me for draggin' you down to this kind of a death."

"It's all a part of the divine plan, Boxer," she answered soothingly. "Otherwise, it would not have been. 'Whatever is, is right.'"

They carried now only a quart can of tomatoes, one blanket—for the nights were cold—and Boxer's six-shooter, with a complement of the cartridges. He had unbuckled and dropped his cartridge belt an hour before.

Presently they paused beside a dwarfed, leafless paloverde tree. Janet stretched the blanket over the bare limbs so as to cast an oblong of shade.

"I don't reckon I'll git up ag'in," said Boxer, as he sank to the ground. "Somehow my head's a-whirlin' so I can't give you no fit directions for keepin' on."

The delicately nurtured girl was as serene as if her task were only the soothing of a fretful babe. She sat down, tailor fashion, beside him.

"Lay your head in my lap, Boxer. The sand is so hot."

"Don't seem skassly right," he muttered.

"What doesn't?"

"Fer me to die so easy, with my head in the lap of an angel, after what I've done to her."

"You're not going to die yet. Aren't you thirsty? Shan't I open the tomatoes?"

"No'm. I'm past tomaters. Besides, they are fer you. But I'm afeerd they won't do you no good. I'll tell you the truth now. It's thirty mile from hyer to San Fernan'. You couldn't make it on one can of tomaters, even if you could find the way. Kin you fergive me fer what I've done to you unknowin'ly?"

"Should I be holding your head in my lap if I hadn't forgiven you?" she asked, smiling down into his wan face. "Can you forgive father for all that he has done to you and yours?"

"Yessum. I reckon he played the game accordin' to the rules as he had learnt 'em. But I didn't. I knowed better than to kidnap you. I knowed it was wrong. But I—I never——"

X.

His eyes closed and he slept for an interval. The girl stared fixedly out into the heat dance of the desert. How strange was life, in its turning of unexpected corners! How strange that she, whose every whim had been gratified since her earliest recollection, whose body had been vestured in the finest and softest fabrics of the loom, and nourished upon the most delicate foods, should now be surrendering to death for lack of a little, tepid, brackish water! She recalled her home, where the pushing of a bell button was sufficient to satisfy every corporeal want. She recalled Camp Hardscrabble, with its superfluity of food, ice, and water.

Boxer opened his eyes.

"Can you pray, Miss Sutherland? It's a low-down trick to pass up the Lord all your life, and then call on Him to pull you out of a pinch like this. I can't do it. But mebbe you can. You ain't led the life I have. You've been good and pure. I seen a movin' picture in Oakland once called 'Tannhauser.' A girl named Elizabeth prayed for her lover, who'd been runnin' wild with a loose woman called Venus. The pope had said that his staff would bloom sooner than her lover's sins should be fergiven. But she prayed jest the same, and, sure enough, the staff did bloom. Of course, it war only a story, but I've allus thought that, in them old times, it might have happened."

Elizabeth's prayer! How well Janet knew its haunting pathos! How vividly she recalled hearing it last, with the gay crowd around her in the opera box! She laid her hands upon Boxer's cheeks, already significantly cool and moist, and repeated slowly and distinctly:

"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures. He leadeth me beside still waters. . . . Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil."

"That's from the Bible," murmured Boxer vaguely. "I got a card once fer sayin' it in Sunday school. I suppose it don't mean real waters, but somethin' better—waters fer the soul, mebbe. Now you might say a few words of your own—somethin' more local like. It's too late fer me, but it might help you. If I—if I could only believe it would"—his lips twitched—"I could slip off easier."

In response, her voice rose in a sweet, solemn prayer. "O God, if it be Thy will, deliver us from this, our extremity. Give us one more chance, after this chastening, to live better and more wholesome lives. But if it is not Thy will, O Father, forgive us our sins, and receive us in Thy arms."

"Leave me out, leave me out!" whis-

pered Boxer. "You'll stand a better chance by goin' it alone."

He closed his eyes, and presently she knew, without touching his pulse, that he was dead. A lump came into her throat; tears gushed from her eyes, and she touched her lips to his forehead.

"My hero!" she murmured.

She did not remove his head from her lap. With no sense of time, she gazed straight ahead with hot, inflamed eyes, seeing nothing. Finally, lowering her glance, she became conscious of the butt of the dead man's revolver protruding from its ornamental Mexican holster. She drew the gun out, and, holding it in her hands, studied it reflectively. Then she extracted the cartridges one by one.

"Messengers of death—messengers of mercy as well!" she mused. "You were good to the ponies, you will be good to me. But not yet."

Grasping the weapon by the barrel, she stove in the head of the last can of tomatoes with the butt, and drank half the contents at a single draft. Then she replaced the cartridges, and laid the weapon by her side.

Presently she noticed a cloud of dust to the eastward, in the direction of San Fernando. She took it to be a wandering whirlwind. But it persisted, drawing nearer and nearer, and at length a party of horsemen appeared upon a distant swell.

She was curiously indifferent to the sight. Such was her detachment from life, that the thought of rescue did not enter her mind. She made no effort to attract their attention, and after a moment withdrew her eyes. When the party galloped up, an hour later, and halted in embarrassment at the strange picture presented to their eyes—for Boxer's head was still in her lap—she looked up vacantly.

"Is this Miss Sutherland?" asked the leader.

"Yes," she answered quietly.

"Is—is that Bill Farney with his head in your lap?"

"I don't know. I have called him Boxer."

"He's the man that kidnaped you, ain't he?"

"Yes."

"We been huntin' for you and Bill for a week. The sheriff tracked you to the desert, after you left the Panamints, and wired us fellers at San Fernan'. We been scoutin' over the country ever since. Finally we decided that Bill must have holed up in the Los Altos, and we was just headin' for there." He dismounted and approached awkwardly, with his sombrero in his hand. "Yes, that's Bill," said he, glancing at Boxer's face. "I jedge he's quite sick, from your holdin' him that way."

"He's dead."

The deputy's jaw dropped. "You don't say so. I'm sure sorry for to hear that. It knocks us boys out of a handsome piece of change. Your father offered a ten-thousand reward. But, of course, Bill didn't do it to spite us."

"No," answered Janet forlornly. "He died to save me. He gave his life for mine. I'll see that you lose nothing by his death, for you have made his sacrifice worth while by finding me. I want his body taken to San Fernando with us."

"We'll sure do that for you, ma'am," answered the deputy, resuming his cheerfulness. "I ain't surprised at Bill's cashin' in at a hundred cents on the dollar. He was always a good-hearted feller, though inclined to be unconventional. More mischeevious than bad, you know. More'n likely he carried you off as a joke. One of the boys will tote him acrost his saddle. 'Tain't what you'd call a pleasant job, of course, so I'll ask for a volunteer. Speak up, one o' you boys!"

"Here," promptly answered a youth.

"Thank you," said Janet, and buried her face in her twitching hands.

The Six Ages of Sandy Saunders

BEING THE LIFE STORY OF A MAN WHO HAD THE WILL TO SUCCEED

By George Randolph Chester

Author of "Get-Rich-Quick Wallingford," "Sledge's Way," Etc.

III.—THE LOVER

YOUNG J. W. SAUNDERS was a hideous disappointment to his mother! She had dragged him to the Hill Club dance to be gay and youthful; and here he was, studded into a dress suit, and finished with a white bow tie, with his beautiful auburn hair waving carelessly back from his noble brow.

But what was he doing now that he was here! He was sitting in the corner with his father and a guest of the Thomases engaged in the deadly earnest conversation of twenty-five, while bright-eyed girls and laughing young men were dancing and flirting, as they should be. And what was the earnest conversation about? Cheese! *Cheese!*

He had just come from college, where he had his choice between law and literature, but he had chosen cheese! He was representing that delicacy for a famous foreign importer of it, and what he wanted to know was this: how would it be possible to get a good grip on the entire market for cheese? So, while the bright-eyed girls eddied and swirled around him, he heeded them not!

Suddenly Young J. W. became aware of Lola Gates. He had known that now fluffy-haired, and pink-cheeked, and brown-eyed young lady since she was a baby; but he had never before been aware of her. Just what spark flashed his tinder he never knew. There was Lola, in something pink and fleecy-like, and a very charming young lady, indeed, talking vivaciously to young Nelson Thomas. Just girl. One second later she was a sprite, a vision, an ethereal dream of world-disturbing loveliness! Perhaps it had been the graceful turn of her head, for it was a pretty head; perhaps it had been the witchery of her smile, for it was a most engaging smile; perhaps it had been the flash of her eye, for she had wonderful eyes, capable of infinite depth, and infinite tenderness, and infinite fire; perhaps it was all of these things, or none; but, at any rate, young J. W.'s brow involuntarily clouded, and his lips squared, and his own blue eyes glinted. What the dickens was Nelse Thomas doing with J. W.'s girl! Nelse Thomas was dog-goned presuming!

Young J. W. was just arranging with the guest of the Thomases for a letter of introduction to an important jobber, but now he rose abruptly and strode across the floor. His mother saw him go. Tall, broad-shouldered, handsome fellow he was!

"Give me a dance, Lola," he cordially remarked.

"Hello, Sandy," returned Lola, but with only that enthusiasm which any member of a "crowd" has a right to

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expect. Nothing more. "Sorry, but my card is full."

"Let's have a look," and smilingly he took the card from her. Fine, masterful way he had about him! His mother could refuse him nothing. "Say, this card's monotonous. There's too much Nelson Thomas." He took the pencil. "Nelse, you can spare me one of these."

Lola shook her head swiftly at Nelse. Sandy Saunders' attitude just now suddenly reminded her that he had bossed her unbearably when they were "kids." Her mother was his godmother, but that did not give him the right to boss her. Black-haired Nelse understood the shake of the head too late.

"That's up to Lo," he smilingly returned, and both young men gazed down at her, waiting.

She smiled graciously. She was compelled to do so.

"I'll select you a nice one." She was all sparkle now, as she took the card. She crossed off the name of Nelson Thomas and substituted the word Sandy. Gad, how the girl had changed in these past few minutes! The transformation was miraculous. She had not been as ravishing as this when Sandy had met her on the street yesterday. "Number eight," she informed them both, and Nelse Thomas looked pained and perplexed. Number eight was the Wooing Waltz, and their favorite, the one they invariably danced together. Dog-gone it, what had he done!

The music struck up. Lola's partner came hurrying over for her, E. B. Bowls, formerly known as Fatty. Nelse hurried away for Vivian Larne, leaving Sandy quite alone; and suddenly quite lonely. He had never felt that way before. It was such a strange sensation that he sat down to analyze it. He did not, however, return to the corner. The topic of cheese had lost its fascination for him. He must see Lola right away about getting married.

What a wonderful girl! Such grace! Such beauty! Such charm! Such everything! Sandy was miserable. That wayward little curl on her temple. It was like spun gold! The bow of her red lips. It was rapturous! That piquant chin, those curving lashes, the adorable little straight nose, the—— How in blazes could she smile so bewitchingly on a lump like Fatty Bowls! Did Bowls have the effrontery to imagine that he had a chance with a peerlessly ethereal creature like Lola Gates? He remembered, with savage satisfaction, that, in their school days, he had given Fat Bowls the drubbing of his life.

Somehow, the eighth dance came around! Eagerly, Sandy went for Lola. He had no need to hunt her, for he had known her location accurately ever since the moment in which he had become aware of her. She was laughing with Nelse, who was holding her scarf and beaming into her eyes. She nodded to Sandy, but, as he whirled her out on the floor, she laughed back to Nelse again; then she smiled politely up to Sandy, and gave a splendid exhibition of dancing.

Something was wrong here. Sandy had come to Lola fairly radiating his share of a perfect mutual understanding, but the other half seemed to be lacking! He sensed the presence of an intangible barrier between them. Indifference! They exchanged a courteous remark or two about the music, but it didn't seem to lead to anything. It began to dawn on him that, while he had made up his mind to marry Lola, perhaps she had not yet made up her mind to marry him. He had probably been an ass.

He had cherished a vague sort of notion that some time during the dance he would mention the matter of matrimony to her, and see how she felt about it; from which point, if need be, he could begin to urge. Somehow, how-

ever, the time did not seem ripe for this. The custom of wooing, for a space, had probably been founded on sound, basic principles, though it was not his way of doing things. His way was to discover that he wanted something, and then go and get it; which was a perfectly sane, sensible, and satisfactory method. This matter, however, would probably have to be approached by degrees. He swung his partner with renewed animation. He might have been an excellent dancer, had he devoted his mind to it.

"Who did you come with, Lola?"

She flashed up at him one of those sparkling glances which meant nothing in particular.

"Nelse."

"Oh, Nelse." That made it easy. "Then I'll walk home with you."

She laughed musically. The idea seemed to amuse her.

"We'll be glad to have you."

Somehow, he did not quite like that answer.

"Will you be at home to-morrow evening?"

"Not to-morrow." A trace of perplexity.

"Next evening?"

She laughed.

"No."

"The next?" Patiently persistent.

A shake of the fluffy head.

"And not the next."

"When may I call?"

Her eyes widened. She glanced at him curiously. For a second she entertained a startling idea, then she dismissed it. Sandy Saunders had matured out of his crowd. It was thoroughly understood that he was indifferent to girls, and, quite naturally, the indifference was mutual.

"Drop in any time next week."

"I'll be there Monday," was the prompt response. He looked down, with again that marvel of her in his clear eyes, and unconsciously his clasp of her became a little more firm. She turned to him quickly, and found his eyes searching deeply into her own. She felt uncomfortable. What had happened to Sandy? "Lo, you have wonderful eyes!"

Lola Gates missed a step, a mistake she had not made in years! She caught her breath. Any one else could have told her that, and she would have blushed and glanced the thing off somehow. But Sandy Saunders! She had a wild impulse to shriek.

"Why, Sandy Saunders!" she exclaimed, and laughed. "Oh, look at Billy Fletcher's new fancy step!"

Sandy became confirmed in his impression that the time was not ripe to mention matrimony! The thing had seemed so simple, at first. He had expected to ask Lola to marry him, but it might be that he would have to make her do so! His mouth squared a trifle, and his shoulders tensed. He would have to put a little thought on this thing.

II.

Sandy Saunders was a hideous disappointment to himself. He had found the girl, and he didn't know how to get her; but it had to be done! If he could only go to her frankly, as he would to a man with a business proposition, he could make her see it. Women were not to be won that way, however. He knew it from his manipulation of his mother; but he had his mother's interest to begin with. The logic was perfectly clear. He must interest Lola!

So far, so good. Sandy smiled. He was very well pleased with himself. He was getting along splendidly!

Now, how does one go about it to interest a girl one has known his entire life? Well, first of all, neglect business. Very good. He was always willing to let go a minor gain for a large one. Lola Gates was the most important thing in the world! Next it

was necessary to be constantly attentive, to be gallant, to supply continuous amusement, to send flowers and candy, and, above everything, to be gay! Very well, he would do all these things. He might feel like a fool; but, if that were the way to Lola Gates, he would go through with it!

The next morning the most desirable girl in the universe received a beautiful corsage bouquet. Sandy! She laughed. How surprising! The next day another! She did not laugh. She was disturbed. The next day another! The conclusion was inevitable that Sandy meant to make himself conspicuous on her list of admirers. She sat in sober thought. She would have to correct that error. An earnest chap like Sandy meant nothing but marriage; which Heaven forbid! She had known Sandy from babyhood! He was a fine young man—with a will of his own!

On Sunday morning, another corsage bouquet, and on Monday a box of roses, a gentle reminder that she would not be going out that evening. How like Sandy! She was compelled to laugh. That night came Sandy, in a new beaver hat, and with a box of candy.

Yes, she read it in his eyes. He gazed down at her with an adoration which was almost pathetic, as she greeted him, and thanked him for the flowers. He was feasting upon her golden hair, her brown eyes, her red lips, and they made him sick with longing. Why in Texas couldn't he just take her in his arms and tell her all about it, without waiting a week or so! Lola released her hand as soon as she conveniently could, and, as Sandy sat down, she studied him again in perplexity. There was a remarkable change in his personal appearance, and she could not locate it!

An awkward pause. They were both uncomfortable; he in the knowledge of what he so desperately wanted to say, and she in the knowledge of what she must never allow him to say. It was queer to have Sandy calling formally. It made a stranger of him.

"Beautiful weather," observed Sandy. A pause. The ordinary smiling answer. "Have you seen the new Mosquito Flit Dance?"

"Great goodness, is there another one!" laughed Lola. "How do you flit?"

A slight hesitation, in which Sandy compressed his lips.

"I'll show you." He rose. "You don't do anything much except skip, until you come to the end of each bar, and then you jump a few times, and flop. This way." Gad, he felt like a fool, but he smiled gayly. "Tum-tiddy-iddy-iddy, tum, tum, tum," he hummed, and flitted.

Lola conquered an internal convulsion. The natural dignity of Sandy and the awkward abandon of the Mosquito Flit were not meant for each other!

"It's ugly enough to be immediately popular," she managed to tell him, and he sensed her recognition that he had made himself ridiculous. He loathed himself for it; but his lips squared. He was bound to interest her, if he made forty mistakes! "Where on earth did you get it?"

"Dancing class." He smoothed his hair with painful concern, and Lola resisted a wild impulse to shriek, as she discovered that perplexing change in his personal appearance. His wavy red hair was plastered close to his hard skull, and it had a tendency to peel up! "I started the day after the Hill Club dance."

It was Lola's turn to pause. Her troubles were already beginning. That last remark, and the look which accompanied it, were significant enough to be headed off.

"I lost a pearl that night," she conveniently remembered. Gad, but the girl was a feast for the eye! She was dressed in something soft and gray,

which was sort of self-draping. He wondered how the dickens she managed to arrange herself so well every time she sat down or got up.

What was it she had said? He had been lost to his eyebrows in his contemplation of her. He remembered the word pearl, but he couldn't think of anything clever to say along that line. Moreover, he was somewhat at sea. He had expected to get a lot of light conversation out of the Mosquito Flit, but the topic seemed to have passed on. He smoothed his hair again.

"What have you been reading lately?"

"Nothing," she gayly rejoined. "I've stopped cultivating my mind. Fun is so much more interesting."

There went his second topic; smash! She wasn't reading just now. If they had talked about books, he might have led inconspicuously around to poetry. It was his one weakness. At the dance, there had been a wayward curl of gold on Lola's temple. Now there was one at the nape of her neck, and it accentuated the grace of that beautiful slender white column. Regarding conversation, why couldn't he just take her in his hungry arms, and look deep down into her brown eyes, and say: "Lola, I love you! Marry me!" Confound his hair! A slice of it near the crown of his head began to lift. He could feel it distinctly.

"Have you seen the new landscape veils?" That was what he said! He felt like a jackass! However, he was going through with this frivolous conversation, if it took a leg! He had started on it, and it had to be finished! His lip squared. What was Lola laughing about?

"You read the fashion sections yesterday," she charged, with no other intention than friendly repartee. She was immediately sorry. Repartee should never deal with the truth. Sandy's face flushed violently, and he rumpled his fingers through his hair.

A longer pause than usual. What in thunder had become of all his light talk! Why did none of it seem to lead any place! He was becoming angry.

"Say, Lo, I have a fine business!" he suddenly blurted. He rumpled his hair with both hands. It flopped back with its natural wave. He looked like Sandy again. "By George, I've been astounded at the financial dimensions of this country. Take the item of cheese alone. There's over twenty-five million dollars' worth of cheese sold annually in the United States."

"Why, that's astonishing," commented Lola, genuinely interested in the startling figures—and relieved at the change in her caller.

"It was a knocker to me," he responded. "I think I have a strangle hold on the best part of that trade, if I can do as well as I have started out. If I can place thirty tons of cheese during the coming year, I can have the exclusive American representation for my firm; and they're the largest in Europe. I'll send you over some of their Roquefort. You'll say that you never tasted cheese like it. I took a sample down to the taster for Robbins, Partridge & Co. last week, and talked half an hour, and came away with a contract in my pocket for five tons, assorted, to be delivered during this year. You know, Lo, I have a plan by which I can eventually control practically the entire high-class cheese trade of this country."

He drew his chair closer. His blue eyes were sparkling; his voice thrilled with animation. There was a good, tingling tenseness in him which made him most interesting to watch. Rather a handsome chap!

"The first thing to do is to take this cheese, which is the best made, and with it create a personal market for myself. That's an asset. It's better

than a million dollars in cash! On that personal market I can build a business of my own." He was profoundly convincing. "I like to sell goods! There's a tremendous satisfaction in going in to a man who doesn't want to buy anything, and coming away with his order. Why, Lo, in five years I'll have the foundation of a fortune!" He'd do it, too. There was no doubt about that. He fairly crackled. "In ten years I'm going to take a profit out of practically every pound of foreign cheese sold in the United States! In fifteen I'll have an air-tight monopoly on all the cheese in the universe! We'll have about everything worth having that there is in the world! We'll pile up our million or so while we're still young enough to enjoy it! Lo," and he caught one of her slender hands in both of his, and held it warmly; "marry me!"

Lola Gates was shocked speechless. For a moment she was paralyzed into allowing her hand to remain where it was. Suddenly she withdrew it, and a queer expression came on her face.

"Why, Sandy!" was all she could say.

"I'm sorry I said this so quickly," Sandy apologized. "But you know I never could piffle around about anything, Lo! I've had you on my mind ever since the other night at the dance. I had expected to keep up this formality for probably a week or two, but if I want anything, I have to go right after it. How about it, Lo?"

"Oh, I couldn't think of it, Sandy!" she told him, and rose.

Sandy rose also, and buttoned the bottom button of his coat.

"You haven't considered it!" he argued. He had lost all trace of his embarrassment.

"It wouldn't make any difference," she returned, feeling rather sorry for him, but firm in her knowledge that with a young man of Sandy's type it was necessary to be very plain. "I could not marry you."

Sandy's blue eyes glinted, and his lips squared. Lola was perfectly familiar with that look.

"You'll marry me," he confidently assured her. "I have to have you!"

The color flamed in her cheeks. Sandy's dictatorial manner had always infuriated her.

"You're just the same as you used to be!" she angrily charged him. "When I was a little girl, the only basis on which I could play with you was to let you have your own way!"

"Well, I haven't changed," he grinned.

"But I have!" she hotly retorted. "I won't marry you, and that settles it!"

"I'll make you!" he informed her. "I'll be over to-morrow night!" and he stalked out.

Nelse Thomas met him down at the corner. Sandy's head was up, his shoulders were drawn back, his jaw was set, his mouth was squared, his eyes were live.

They passed the pleasant greetings of the evening; but, as they spoke, they gazed steadily at each other, and into the eyes of each there came a hard look.

III.

Lola was not at home when Sandy called on Tuesday evening. She had gone to the theater with Nelse. She was not at home on Wednesday evening. She had gone driving with Nelse. She did not mean to be at home on Thursday evening, but Sandy, who was a natural tactician, called unexpectedly at six-thirty, and stalked through the kitchen, where he had often eaten jam, and walked through to the dining room. Mrs. Gates, who had been Sandy's godmother, took one look at the faces of both of them, and remembered some neglected duties upstairs. They were alone almost before they realized it.

"Well, I'm here," he grinned.

Lola merely glared at him.

"I've come again to ask you to marry me. I'm coming again and again until you do!"

"You'll receive the same answer every time!" she flared. "I've told you definitely, positively, and finally that I will not marry you; and I won't!"

She swung into the sitting room, and he followed her.

"I haven't had a chance to tell you how much I love you, Lo; but you know it," he told her, his voice ringing with the depth and earnestness of that emotion. "I love you so that I have no other thought!" He stepped nearer to her, where she stood by the window. She stepped backward a little. "I love you till you have filled the world with it, till I can see no other face, till I can hear no other voice! Awake or asleep, I see you, your shining hair, your wonderful eyes, your red lips, all the marvelous grace and beauty of you, and all the sweetness!"

He seemed to fill the room with his presence, with his voice, with his great longing and need of her. Lola was standing as if graven, but the lace curtain at her side trembled.

"Not a plan I have but centers around you!" he went on. "I have no hope in life which does not have you as its beginning and its ending. I have never loved, Lola. I could not, because all through my life I have, without knowing it, been saving it up like a miser, until it should be more than any love in the world, stronger, and deeper, and wider; so that I could bestow it on you!" He came nearer. "I love you, Lola! I want you! I need you! I must have you! I will have you! I cannot take No for an answer! You know that I won't take No for an answer! You know that I never did! You remember——"

His voice had risen to an imperious height. It was interrupted by another one equally imperious.

"No!" cried that voice. "No! No!" No!"

She had not retreated when he had advanced; nor did she now. She even seemed to move defiantly toward him; but it was only an impression, a slight swaying of her body.

The red blood flooded up in Sandy's face; his jaws set; his lips squared; his eyes narrowed. The thing which his father called temper, and his mother determination, but which was will, filled him through and through. What obstacle was this which impeded him! What strength was this which had opposed him! What force was this which had pitted itself against him! By the eternal, it was not to be endured! There should be no obstacle, no strength, no force! He could not permit it!

"You are mine!" he told her. "Mine! In your heart, you know it! You are stubborn, but you'll have to come to me! No one else shall have you! I shall stand guard, and see that no one interferes with me! You shall not make any unhappy mistake! You belong to me, whether you admit it or not!" He was a whirlwind. She trembled lest the sheer force of him should sweep her away, as it had used to do when they were children.

"No!" she cried. "No!"

She blazed defiance into his eyes; and into him surged still added will. He had moved the unmovable with that superforce, with that extra strength, which had all his life seemed to come to him when his last atom of strength was exhausted. He had set his whole being on the possession of this girl, and there was nothing in all the universe which could turn him from that attainment. He caught her by the wrists.

"Lola, you must!" he said. His voice was low and tense, and in it was all the compulsion of desire, and passion, and will. "You must! Do you hear me!" He bent on her the full blaze of his

eyes. She felt herself swimming under them. She felt herself weakening. "You must! Tell me!"

She tried to wrench herself away.

"No!" she defied him, with her fluttering breath. "I hate you! Do you suppose I'd marry a brute like you! Do you suppose I'd subject myself to a life of humiliation! Do you suppose I would deliberately choose to be a slave! Let go!"

Well, the extra surge of will, for the first time in Sandy Saunders' life, fell back, shattered. The irresistible force had met with the immovable object, and the result was a blank. Nothing was left but Sandy's persistence and determination and positively undying intention to secure what he wanted. He let go, and all the passion which had been in his face and his eyes disappeared, leaving behind it, what? A grin!

"You're all right, Lola," he remarked, with distinct approval. "I'll be around again to-morrow."

IV.

Lola was not at home next night. She was somewhere with Nelse, and she was somewhere with Nelse every time Sandy called in the next three days. When Nelse came home on the fourth night, he found Sandy waiting at the gate of the Thomas cottage. Sandy walked down the block to meet him.

"I want to speak with you," he said, and his voice was husky.

Nelse tensed himself. He knew what was coming.

"Well?"

"Have you any claim on her?"

"What's that to you?"

"Stay away from her!"

"You be——!"

In the old days this would have been the last word between them. They had often fought. Sandy had invariably been the conqueror, but he had always had to fight. They had been good friends.

"I have warned you; that's all," and Sandy strode away.

Naturally, Nelse went immediately to Lola. He called the next morning. He had proposed frequently to that young lady, but never seriously, and never with the fire he put into it now. Unfortunately for him, he brought a fire where there had been a conflagration, and the blaze was not impressive. Good friends can't make love! There was a tremendous tragedy in the Gates' cottage, and Nelse went away broken-hearted. He was entirely unconvinced that the sun would ever shine again, that there were as good fish in the sea as ever were caught, and that he would be married in two years to a total stranger, whom he would woo like a whirlwind. Of one thing he was sure. His refusal, this time, had been final and decisive!

He was still a man. He went straight to Sandy, and defied him. In spite of the warning, he had gone to Lola! Still a man, he admitted that he had been refused.

Sandy was up to the Gates' cottage in less than an hour. It had been a great relief to have Nelse's affair brought to a head.

Mrs. Gates met him at the door.

"I'm sorry, Sandy; Lola's not at home." She said that with a perfectly straight face, but there were traces of past tears in her eyes.

"She's in the house," and the clear blue eyes of Sandy, haggard though they were, had in them the same compelling power which had won her when she had held him in her arms, as a baby, at his christening. Why, it was on that very day she had promised to marry Lola's father.

"Lola is not at home, Sandy." She was very firm about it, but there was emphasis on that "not at home."

"Tell her I'll wait for her to come

down," and, smiling at her, even in his wanness, with that sunshine which had so often made Mrs. Gates agree with Jane Saunders that he was the most lovable baby in the world, he stalked into the sitting room, and sat down.

She followed him, with serious concern on her brow.

"You can't do this, Sandy," she protested. "Lola simply cannot see you."

Sandy's under lip straightened.

"She'll have to see me some time, and it might as well be now. I'll wait here until she comes."

She was genuinely vexed with the boy! She had long ago considered seriously that red head, and wondered if its roundness made it so impervious to argument or persuasion. Many a "licking" she had saved him.

"You go home, Sandy," she said sharply. "That's my girl, and you shan't annoy her." There was that in her which would have fought even Sandy, much as she liked him, and much as she knew his deathless obstinacy.

He turned his haggard eyes to her. He had not been sleeping recently.

"I just have to see her." It was not an appeal; it was not a defiance; it was a mere weary statement of a settled fact.

Mrs. Gates said not a word; but, with creases on her brow, turned slowly and left the room. Outside the door she stopped and pondered for a long minute of perplexity. She climbed slowly up the stairs, and, outside the door, at the top of the landing, she pondered for another long minute of perplexity. She knocked and went in. A slight figure, pathetically pale in her plain dark-blue house frock, sat bolt upright on the edge of the bed. The imprint of her fluffy head was still in the pillows, and a little damp handkerchief lay near it.

"Sandy is downstairs," reported the mother apologetically.

"I heard him," returned the daughter accusingly. "Why did you let him in?"

Mrs. Gates repressed a smile.

"I didn't."

"I'm not at home!"

"I told him that; twice." A deep breath. "He says that he'll stay there until he sees you."

There was a flash from the somber eyes.

"I'll stay here until he goes!"

Mrs. Gates sat down, and allowed the smile its full sway.

"If I were you, I'd go," she advised. "I've known Sandy since I looked like that." She indicated the picture over the fluffy little lace-draped dressing table. It could have been taken for a picture of Lola now. "He'll stay there until I call a policeman."

In spite of Lola's unhappiness, she snickered.

"And we don't want to gratify the neighbors," added her mother, pressing home her slight advantage. "Lola, you must go down and get rid of him. I'm going to have company this afternoon. What's the trouble between you and Sandy?"

"I hate him!" declared Lola vehemently. "I despise him! I loathe him! He's stubborn! He bossed me around when I was a little girl, and you needn't think he can do it now!"

"I don't," retorted Mrs. Gates, with a twinkle in her eyes. "You're as stubborn as he is." She rose. "May I loan Sandy some of your books?"

A flash of blue swept past her. The flash swept back, and changed its bedroom sandals for some slippers. It swept haughtily out again. It appeared indignantly in the sitting room, and it said:

"Well?"

She was tired, but she was ready to fight again. To her surprise, Sandy only smiled down at her. His blue eyes twinkled, in spite of the circles of sleeplessness about them. His smile was

like a sudden bolt of sunshine on a cloudy day.

"Come on, Lo," he coaxed her, laughing down at her, and his voice was full of wheedling. "Let's make up."

"There's nothing to make up!" she icily informed him.

"So much the better," he agreed, stepping closer to her. "Come on, Lo." Still that wheedling tone. It aggravated her. "Let's get married."

"I told you no!"

"Please, Lo!" Sitll with that coaxing tone, and that wheedling smile. "Please marry me, Lo! Please do! Please!"

She shook her head decisively.

"You bossed me for the last time, when we were still in school," she informed him. "I positively will not be bossed!"

"Indeed you won't," he soothingly agreed. "Nobody wants to boss you. When we are married, you may hold the whip and the reins, and I'll do the prancing. Why, Lo"—in spite of himself a trace of his strong love crept into that wheedling tone—"why, Lo, dear, I love you!" He was close enough to her now to look almost straight down into her eyes. He slipped both his arms around her. "Please do, Lo! Please!"

She bit her lip. She made a pretense of drawing away, and then she laughed. She started to say something, but she did not finish it, because he kissed her. Sandy was pretty well pleased with himself!

The fourth story in this series is entitled "The Business Man." In the June month-end POPULAR, on sale two weeks hence, May 23rd.

SPEAKING UNDER DIFFICULTIES

AS a political speaker, William Jennings Bryan has had a bewildering lot of experiences. One of the funniest on his list was what happened to him when, as a young man, he visited a small place in Illinois for the purpose of showing the voters exactly how to vote.

Shortly before the psychological moment came for young Bryan to let loose the floods of his oratory, an old countryman approached him mysteriously, and silently led him around to the back of the schoolhouse. There he drew from his pocket a bottle of whisky and pronounced the classic command:

"Have a drink."

"No, thanks," said Mr. Bryan.

The old man's eyes widened, and in their depths was the shadow of fear.

"Just a little," he said persuasively.

"No, not even a little," Mr. Bryan declined again politely.

The old man's eyes began to bulge.

"Just one drop," he insisted.

Mr. Bryan declined for the third time.

The old man's chest grew flatter, his shoulders sagged, and he was the picture of melancholy as he said, with indescribable pathos:

"Well, do the best you can, anyway."

The Madness of Cranston

By Frank E. Evans

Author of "In the Heart of the Fog," Etc.

The strange story of the only white man who took the "oath of blood" and gained initiation into the Katipunan, the infamous secret society of the Filipinos

BLACK smudges were drifting to leeward from the funnels, and the speed cones were calling for full cruising speed when Cranston's name first came up. Signal flags, gaudy in their mosaics of yellow, red, and blue as a college boy's neckwear, were whipping out to the breeze in deep-sea talk of coal reports. Lean turret guns swung from port to starboard in the never-ending drill. Dusk fell, and off to windward and dead astern of us in the double-column formation of the fleet the red and white Ardois lights winked news of the next day's routine, while we—we still talked of Cranston and his day's work that had begun in the fleet and ended tragically in a Philippine jungle.

We had left the cinder-coated decks for the wardroom country, and waited for Radcliffe, the junior surgeon—for Radcliffe had been in at the death—to take up the tale in his own time.

"Since I was the last man who saw him in the uniform of his corps, and the first to talk with him when he came back, clad in the makeshift clothes of a native," Radcliffe began, "there are some things that the service should know. Oddly enough, the first time I ever saw Cranston, he was dealing out hard justice to a deserter, a private in his own guard. A devilish coincidence. Right at the start I gained a curious insight into that remarkable youngster's code of the service. He was barely twenty-five at the time, but a veteran of three campaigns. I had just reported on the *Kentucky* at Portland, and had come up on deck from the captain's cabin.

"A deserter, one of Cranston's marines, had come out in the running boat to give himself up. His beard was untrimmed, his shoes broken, his clothing ragged. He was a man beaten at every angle. Cranston stood a few paces from him, coldly impersonal, until the executive came aft. Then the deserter's feet shot together, he braced out of his slouch, and his hand came smartly up to the salute. The 'exec' returned it involuntarily, for he knew that outcast had been in the service at some time. A few incisive questions, and he turned to Cranston.

"'Captain Cranston, this man says his name is Roberts, deserted this ship at New York three months ago, one of your men.'

"Cranston smiled. 'One of my men, sir? Never saw him before.'

"I could see the deserter, as he claimed to be, wince as though Cranston had struck him.

"'Also says he came to give himself up. Walked and rode "blind baggage" to catch the ship here.' The 'exec's' face was a study as he waited for Cranston's answer.

"'The man is a faker, sir. Roberts jumped ship in uniform, and he was a clean man. This—this hobo is in 'cits' clothing and no man in my guard ever

looked like that, sir. I'll send for the first sergeant. He can verify what I tell you.'

"Sullivan, a grizzled old Irish soldier man, who always carried a swagger stick ashore, and who worshiped Cranston, was on deck in a minute. Before the 'exec' could say a word, Cranston cut in coolly:

" 'Sergeant, take a good look at this man. Claims to be Roberts. Did you ever see a man like that in the guard?' It was clear-cut and cold-blooded, and I saw his eyes riveted on Sullivan's face. You remember them, cold and gray, the eyes that ask and give no odds?

"Sullivan's answer came slow and measured like the throb of the screws when we slow down to pick up targets: 'I never did, sir. Roberts was a smart soldier, sir.'

"Then again Cranston questioned the corporal of the guard, and the answer was the same. The man's head dropped, and one broken shoe cracked nervously on the deck. Then, without a word, he turned forlornly and shuffled down the port gangway and into the running boat alongside. I heard the coxswain sing out his orders, the swish of the cutter's blades, and I turned to go below. Then a strange thing happened.

"I had been so satisfied by the decisive answers of Cranston and his noncoms that I had no doubt but that the man really was an impostor, an audacious bidder for at least a square meal at the expense of the commissary. But in the stern sheets of the cutter just rounding our quarter the man had jumped to his feet. His face was purple with rage, and he cursed every officer on board, swinging his tattered derby like a hammer at every word. He cursed us by name and title, and yelled the numbers of his sea bag, his rifle, and hammock at us. They were right, too. Then he began to enlarge bitterly on the lineage of Cranston until the scandalized coxswain pulled his feet out from under him.

" 'Shut up, Roberts,' I heard him growl, 'or I'll break a boat stretcher over your leather neck.' "

"Why in thunder did Cranston do that?" broke in Ledyard.

"Some one pass me a tailor-made cigarette and I'll tell you. Thanks, Hallowell. It was some weeks afterward before I felt that I knew him well enough to ask. I had come to know him, as you did, as efficient in the extreme, a good shipmate, keen as any officer in the service. He often suggested to me the cold-blooded efficiency of a great steel plant reduced to the terms of one man. He listened with a cool smile and said:

" 'Medico, I had a green guard when you joined, only three old-timers besides the noncoms. They needed the fear of God whipped into their souls worse than the corps needed a deserter. They'll remember all through their enlistment that Roberts broke faith with the service, and that when he came back the service would have none of him. That man was filthy where Roberts was clean, a bum where Roberts was as smart a man as any in the ship's company. He may have been Roberts, but he wasn't Roberts to me.'

" 'But the first sergeant and the corporal,' I asked, 'didn't they recognize him as well as the coxswain of that cutter? Hadn't they even messed with him?'

" 'They didn't tell the "exec" so,' smiled Cranston, and his eyes rested deliberately on mine, and I knew that—well, that the two noncoms had told the "exec" only what Cranston had willed they should," and Radcliffe laughed nervously.

"He hated a dirty man worse than a sailor hates a sea-bag thief," I said. "As to his ethics, one thing is sure, they were honest."

"Well," Radcliffe put down his glass of Scotch and took up the tale again, "he was detached and ordered out to the islands soon after. I went out the next year and was attached to his battalion at Olongapo. We got to be close friends, and I saw him go through a change there that left me groping in the dark for weary months before the truth came to me after the fight at Salingan. Billy just said that Cranston hated a dirty man. I wouldn't call the Filipinos that—they have no word that expresses more disgust than their word for unclean, *sucio*—but how he despised them. There never was a white man on the frontiers of his race who had a greater contempt for an alien one. He had proved the Malay's utter inferiority to his own satisfaction too well down in Samar and in the few brushes about Zambales Province. He carried a cavalry carbine on the hikes, and I remember one story he told me about a fight in Samar. Walton's men were sweeping the lower end of the island clean as a whistle. One day Cranston and a squad of six marines flushed a band of ladrones. Two volleys decimated them, and they picked off the rest, all but one, as they scurried back into the bush. He got away down a trail to the beach, Cranston after him. Cranston broke the hombre's ankle at five hundred yards, but the poor devil went limping along over the sharp coral. Then Cranston tried him prone, and his shot kicked up a spurt of white in the coral twenty yards short. The next took him between the shoulders."

"He was a witch with the rifle," commented Hallowell.

"I remonstrated with him, told him a plucky beggar like that deserved a better fate. Cranston laughed and turned his eyes on me.

" 'He was only a Malay, medico, at war with us. He made one less, and one more on this.' With that he pulled the carbine out from its case and pointed to a notch along the stock. The end one in a double row of notches, it looked to me for all the world like the jaws of a shark."

"There never was a better chap, though," I maintained stoutly.

"I only tell it to illustrate his attitude toward the Malay," answered Radcliffe. "It was his utter exclusion of all else but the good of the service that was the mainspring in all his motives. I remember, too, and I think it had a large bearing on his final action, how he raged in his quarters one day about the major who had been in command just before I joined at Olongapo. The major had sallied forth in *full dress,* mind you, to make a formal call on the presidente. He sent Cranston out a week later to deliver a message. They told him that the presidente was asleep and, *Madre de Dios!* he could not be disturbed. 'Where's his room?' thundered Cranston. The quaking hombres pointed out the room where the great man was sleeping on his grass matting. Cranston swung into the room, shot his foot into the most responsive part of the presidente, spat out the message, and left the presidencia as though it was a pest hole. He applied for a transfer to Polloc that same day, but the mail brought in the major's orders home, and Cranston stayed at Olongapo."

The stroke of "two bells" came muffled to the wardroom country, and Hallowell, as one might say "it must be time for dinner," remarked, "Time for the poker game in the steerage." No one moved, for we knew that Radcliffe was coming to the amazing desertion of Cranston from the service.

"Then came the smallpox scare," he went on, "and Cranston was the only man who went down with it. Before that, however, I must tell you how completely, how absolutely he seemed to change from his contempt and hatred

of the natives into what the islands is pleased to call 'a nigger lover.' Without warning he began to cultivate them, to go to their dull *bailes* and foot it about the bamboo floors with slipperless mestizas; to spend Sunday mornings at the cockpits and his afternoons off with Raymundo, shooting wild pigeon and pigs back in the hills. Raymundo had been a colonel in the insurrectos, and rumor had it that he had been active in the Katipunan Society. The facility with which Cranston had picked up the jaw-breaking Tagalog dialect surprised me as much as anything until he told me that his knowledge of Sanskrit, learned at college, made it easy. It seems that all those dialects in the islands are full of Sanskrit derivatives."

"Don't tell the department or they'll add it to the curriculum at the navy school," warned Ledyard facetiously.

"The major came in from a ride up the province about that time, madder than a fire-control officer over target-practice dispersions, and Cranston was at the bottom of it. The major had seen him in a native shack at San Narciso, squatting on his heels for all the world like a native, in conversation with the dignitaries of that barrio. Unlike his predecessor, the major had as rigid views about social equality, as applied to the Filipinos, as Cranston himself once had. He had Cranston up that evening after mess, and threatened to have him sent back to the States. Cranston told him he'd resign first and stay out in the islands as a civilian, and the major dropped it.

"Then came the smallpox, evidently picked up in one of the native villages on Cranston's calling list. We were under tentative orders to China then, so Cranston's stock went pretty low. The upshot of it was that we quarantined him in a tent along the strip of beach between the post and the native town. I went out with him.

"I'll never forget those days," and Radcliffe's voice dropped to a lower level, "for then I really got to know Cranston. His case was a light one, and I could have returned him to duty a week earlier. It would have made no difference, though," and he shook his head sadly. "Cranston's mind must have been made up before he got the smallpox. One night we talked clear through to dawn. We could hear the sentries calling off the hours until 'two bells and a-l-l's w-e-l-l!' and the fireflies had gone and the vampire bats were wheeling home off Grande Island. The talk was mostly about the Katipunan, then at its greatest tide since Rizal was shot on the Luneta by a file of Spanish soldiers. I was amazed to find how much he knew about it. Pilar had organized it as an offshoot of Spanish masonry, and Cranston claimed that in Cavite Province, its hotbed, there were nearly a half million members.

"One night, by the favor of Raymundo, he had lain in a cane thicket back by Subig and watched a meeting. They wore green masks, their emblem of hope, but Cranston believed that the green would soon give way to red, the war masks. A triangle, the emblem with which we were all familiar, stood for the idea that each new Katipunero was to attract two more members to occupy the opposite angles, an endless chain of triangles. I never thought then that Cranston was destined to fill out one of the angles. The Nilad was the mother lodge, and the initiated were called 'brethren.' There had been no initiations the night he had lain in the jungle, and I could see that he was keen to pick up its details. Of course, you know that their aim had been to overthrow Spanish rule, and, not content with their past, they were getting under way to try the same on us.

"I could see how it fascinated him,

its mysterious, symbolic rites, its uncanny powers for evil, and I jokingly accused him of being a member; one of Raymundo's endless chains. I'll never forget how he looked me full in the face with those cold gray eyes and said, without a smile, 'Medico, no white man ever broke into the Katipunan. Lord, man, think what he could do if he did.' Five minutes later we were out in the bay, taking our morning swim, and the sun was climbing out of the China Sea. I had no old-fashioned ideas about quarantine, and every day we took a plunge, and then Cranston would take his carbine and a belt full of dumdum governments and go up in the hills."

Radcliffe stopped and caught up a fresh cigarette from the teakwood box on the transom. His hand trembled when he lighted it, and the faint lap of the sea against the ship's outer skin and the rumble of the ash hoist made the silence of the room uncomfortable. A few deep puffs, and he went on in the same low, level intonation that betokened the strain of the story.

"You chaps know that he never came back from that morning hike except for those few horrible moments at Salingan. We had to face two alternatives. He was either dead in the hills, with native dogs fighting over his bones, or —he had deserted. Slowly at first, although no one ventured to say so openly, the latter belief won. His queer intimacy with the natives, the uncanny grip that the islands had fastened on him, his marked restlessness—all pointed that way. At times I thought of the Katipunan, but not until after Salingan did I mention it. The idea was too fantastic. The subject tacitly became taboo, for in the history of the corps there had never been a desertion by a commissioned officer. Cranston's name was not only dropped from the muster rolls, but the battalion had apparently blotted it out from memory.

"Then luckily came field service, an uprising in Luzon that threatened widespread insurrection once more. I found myself wishing passionately that Cranston would come back from the hills, for he was, above all, a field soldier. Before we got our marching orders from Manila, rumors came up to the post of a white renegade posing as a mad priest, with the rebels, as they had a few times before during our occupation. Cranston's name was never mentioned, but it was uppermost in the thoughts of the battalion. It blotted out the old whirlwind of joy that used to sweep through the marines when such orders came. There was only a grim determination to smash the first outfit we met and—to get Cranston.

"After a few skirmishes and night attacks we were brigaded, along with the Cavite battalion, with the army outfit under Derrick. The main body of the insurrectos had fallen back on the old Spanish fortifications at Salingan, and our native scouts brought in word that skillful field works had brought the famous stronghold up to an even greater efficiency than it had boasted under the days of Weyler and Blanco. Field engineering, I knew, had been Cranston's hobby, for he had graduated from Lehigh before he entered the service. The regiment knew it, too, and the feeling that had smoldered so bitterly broke out openly. It was bad enough to have the scandal in the corps, but to have the world learn it in this fashion—that hurt.

"We found the usual pitfalls and obstacles on the march: Sunken pits sewn with bamboo stakes and hidden by cogon grass, but with devilish variations. They showed the science of a white man's army interwoven with the cunning of the jungle people. Oddly enough, they bothered us little. An infantryman on point duty fell into a pit the second day out, and was fished out

with a bamboo splinter in one leg. The advance guard found a strip of crimson cloth tied to a split of bahuca fiber at the pit's edge, and doped it out as a clumsy device of the insurrectos to put their own men on guard. What a laugh went down the line that day and the following days at the way we turned their own warnings to our advantage."

"How were the strips tied on?" asked Ledyard curiously.

"Each strip with a square knot and two half hitches."

"Sailorman fashion, eh! Queer stunt for a Philippine jungle."

"I saw at least eight of them the day we had the advance guard. Each time we left a marine at the trap to warn the main body. Thanks to the crimson strips we came to a day's march of Salingan with but one man on the hospital list, and without a show of resistance. The first shot came as we advanced into a pass a half mile long. Our field maps showed that at the other end the pass opened out, and that on the left flank it debouched out on the shores of Lake Cabangan. Two battalions of the Twenty-eighth Infantry were leading, then came Hatley's battery, the marines, and a battalion of the Thirty-third Infantry bringing up the rear. They were sniping at us from the rocks above, but doing little damage.

"Then came a delay as unexpected as it was unwelcome, and men began to drop in the column as the insurrectos picked up the range. The signal-corps people were with the rear guard, stringing their wires behind them and keeping in touch with Manila. The order had come in, an imperative one, to advance no farther unless we were attacked in force, or until further word came from Washington to go ahead. They were playing politics back in Washington, and Manila was relaying the new strategy of the campaign to Derrick."

"Reminds me," grumbled Hallowell, "of the only time I dropped into the halls of Congress. The House had the navy bill up, and, believe me, fellow shipmates, those congressmen can make less hits per man, per minute, than a submarine six fathoms down firing at sea gulls."

The acme of efficiency in the navy being tersely expressed by the formula "hits per gun, per minute, "we laughed at his description of the lawmakers, and Radcliffe concurred.

"Be that as it may," he went on, "here is what they handed to Derrick. It was all due to some anti-imperialistic speech in the Senate and the row that the Mount Dajo fight kicked up back in the States, and the administration was all for pacific measures. You can imagine the streaks of blue that went up from that snaky column of khaki."

"I can imagine the combined efforts of doughboys, artillerymen, and sea soldiers," laughed Hallowell, "to say nothing of the sincere efforts of your army teamsters. But, if my Philippine history is correct, you went on."

"We did. You see it was no secret that Derrick was out for his brigadier's stars. He was on the eve of retirement, and he had been jumped by too many juniors not to make the most of Salingan. He foxed Manila pretty cleverly. We were already in the pass, and it was impossible to rest there and wait for the word from Manila for our next move. To go back, Derrick knew, would gum the whole campaign and put a terrible dent in our prestige in the islands. Therefore, he decided to withdraw from an untenable position by going ahead. Salingan was just beyond the pass."

"Clever old scout," murmured Ledyard.

"Not the only snappy stunt he pulled off. We had had enough of the old stories of boloed outposts and stolen rifles from the southern islands, and we

were determined to wind up the campaign with a whirl. We streamed through that pass on the double, bullets whining against the rocks and kicking up the dust on our flanks. The insurrectos were at their old trick of firing with rifles from which they had chopped off the front sights to get a better aim, and their shooting was almost a joke. Just outside the pass we rushed two small outworks, and my heart sank into my puttees. I had seen gun emplacements so like them out on Grande Island that I could not mistake the handiwork. They were Cranston's. You remember, Billy?" and he turned to me.

"Right," I answered. "The time we mounted the five-inch from Cavite on Grande for the maneuvers Cranston designed every foot of the emplacements from the glacis to the magazines."

"We took them easily enough, but a determined force could have enfiladed us from them with heavy losses. We surmised that they had drawn in their lines to the cover of Salingan's walls and had let them go by default. We went into camp to give the men a rest and their noonday chow before closing in on the old fortress. All hands were keen to finish the trick before any other messages came over the wires from Manila, and Derrick had a scheme that worked like a new shift play from a Western gridiron. He sent two companies of the Twenty-eighth ahead, ostensibly for reconnoissance, but with instructions tantamount to drawing the fire of the enemy and then the simulation of a disorganized retreat. It was well staged and the insurrectos bit. A horde of them poured out of the old fortress, and some of their shots from a ragged volley dropped into the mule corral on our flank nearest the lake. There was much profanity, and a wounded mule stampeded out of the lines.

"That was all that Derrick needed; he could report that he had been attacked in force. Hatley's guns opened up at easy range, and after they had played tattoo on the Spanish masonry cunningly, the foot troops moved forward in line of two columns, deploying as the country opened up ahead. We were within six hundred yards before their return fire had any effect. Then it was a storming rush by platoons under a hail of flying slugs, pieces of brass, and the sobbing flight of more modern projectiles from the varied ordnance of the natives' ranks, now intrenched behind the walls. A marine fell back, his face streaming with blood, crying with rage. I made a jump for him, and he waved me away. 'One of them blasted niggers hit me—in the face—with a—with a—rock!' he shouted. Then the full indignity of the insult burst on him, and he rushed back into the scrap, working the bolt handle of his Krag with the speed of an automatic rifle. We were now within three hundred yards of the big moat that ran around three faces of Salingan, and the details were rushing up the ladders for the final assault. Word was passed to lie prone and let Hatley's guns, now on the left flank, take a close-range hammering at the walls in hopes of making a breach. Then came the dramatic climax to the fight at Salingan.

"Before the guns could begin their tattoo a man in crimson robes, flowing like the garments of a priest, leaped on the ramparts of the old fortress and held both arms extended above his head. The fire of the natives stopped like magic. His face was covered with a crimson mask, the war mask of the Katipunan. His arms moved like well-ordered flails, and they were spelling out a message in the wigwag code of the navy. The word flashed from flank to flank of the line, and Hatley's guns were silent. Fifteen hundred men

in khaki lay in the beating sun, watching with parched lips and aching eyes those swift-moving crimson arms. All down the front of the marine regiment the sea soldiers were spelling out the message aloud. There was wonder in their voices, and it boomed out to the infantry and artillery like the chant of a male choir.

"'I have set slow fuse to magazine. It will blow up in five minutes. Withdraw by rushes simulating retreat. Send two companies left flank after explosion. Only trail survivors can take.'

"The arms swung three times to show the message was finished, and again they rose slowly. I could hear the marines panting from more than the heat, for every man jack of them was waiting tensely for the signature that was coming.

"'C-r-a-n-s-t-o-n.'

"No thought of a trick came to any of us. It was too weird, too oppressive for that, and it was as though we had been watching a man daring death and torture with every stroke of his crimson arms. The bugles sounded the retreat, then the double, and as we raced back to the zone of safety men were crying and stumbling, all unstrung, in the marines. They greeted our withdrawal with high-pitched yells, for they evidently thought their mad priest had driven us back by magic incantations, and their patchquilt variety of ordnance blazed away. Then came the explosion. The walls of Salingan opened out like rotten cheesecloth, crumpled up like papier-mâché. There were mighty few survivors to take the secret trail on the left flank. We searched the ruins and the bush vainly for Cranston.

"Not until we came across a casement did we find even a sign of his presence there. The casement had been draped in black cloth, and here and there, under the rubble, we made odd finds. Cranston's sacerdotal robes were in one corner, beneath them the war mask. Across the robes was the black triangle of the Katipunan, like this:

"Near by we found the war flag of the Katipunan, red and blue, with a sun in the center encircled by seven stars. There were other bits of mummery. Derrick looked solemnly at each article as it was handed to him. 'Not only Salingan has fallen for the first time in its bloody history, men, but with it a stronghold of the K. K. K.,' he said slowly. Then Carstairs of the marines spoke up: 'Colonel Derrick, the next to fall will be a brace of silver stars for your shoulder straps.' That brought a cheer that made old Derrick chew his mustaches grimly, and helped us forget, for the moment, poor Cranston's fate.

"Tattoo sounded that night over a tired outfit, but the notes had barely died before a Krag barked from an outpost. A cry in English followed it and then a second shot. I was at headquarters when two bewildered infantrymen carried Cranston in. A blot of red was widening on the native camisa he wore when I kneeled over him. 'It's Radcliffe, Cranston.' He opened his eyes, the same cold gray ones, without a flicker in them to betray emotion or pain. Aside from that he was sadly changed, poor devil." The medico's voice broke. "'I know, medico,' he whispered, 'saw you out there—on the firing line—with my old buck marines.' 'You're going to get well, old man,' I told him, but he shook his head. 'That last shot from the outpost got me here,' he whispered, 'the first one in the belly, good shoot-

ing.' Then before I could stop him he ripped the camisa away from his chest and rested his hand on a bundle of documents tied about it. His hand was bloody when I gently pulled it away. I cut the cords away from the papers and handed them to Derrick."

"Cranston was delirious after that. He raved about a room draped in black and a table with a human skull on it. And as we listened and heard him babble of *pacto-de-sangre,* the 'oath of blood,' we knew that he was baring for us the secrets of his initiation into the Katipuneros; the initiation of the only white man who had ever been received into the Supreme Society of the Sons of the People, as the Filipinos prefer to call the Katipunan. 'Skull—cross-bones—two candles—triangle,' he rambled on, 'I signed—dagger—white man's blood.' There was horror in his voice. Then he made swift signs with his left hand, and cried, in a clear voice that carried out into the fringe of hushed men about headquarters tent, 'Brethren.' He died with it on his lips, and the bugles were sounding taps for Derrick's column before Salingan.

"The documents?" asked Ledyard after a decent interval.

"A complete exposé of the K. K. K., list of lodges and officers of Nilad—the mother lodge—brief military plan of the proposed uprising in Manila the night of April twenty-seventh, the men who were financing it, both natives and European business men, details of the initiation, in short, everything that the insular government and the service had only guessed at. They filled many a gap, closed many a broken link for the Bureau of Insular Affairs back in Washington. The uprising never came off. Some prominent native statesmen and well-known business men who represented foreign houses were missing from the clubs and the Escolta in Manila soon after. They're still in exile. On the other hand—Salingan taken without the loss of a man, Derrick's silver stars have fallen, campaign medals for the outfit, the Katipunan an ugly memory."

"But Cranston?"

"That," said Radcliffe slowly, "each man must decide for himself. Nearly all of the evidence is in. When he raved that night about the oath he had subscribed to in his own blood, I found myself wondering. An oath was a solemn thing to him."

"More so than the one he took with his first commission?" I asked skeptically.

"No, not when the acid test came. My theory is that he deliberately left the service to master the secrets of the K. K. K. There was much of the Eastern fatalism, the cold-bloodedness of it, in Cranston, despite his old antipathy to the natives. After he took the *pacto-de-sangre* the fascination of his new life may have carried him away. I believe that it did, but that the sight of our lines that day, his old battalion in the center, broke the last of the spell. He must have been coming into our lines that night to give us the documents, not trying to break through. Even before that he must have betrayed their sunken pits to us with his red strips tied on in sailorman fashion. I held my friendship with Cranston too high to do him an injustice. Kipling says of the East and the West 'and never the twain shall meet.' They came nearer with Cranston than with any other Anglo-Saxon I ever knew of, but they didn't quite bridge the gap."

We were tilting the bottle of Scotch, silent with the mystery of it all, when a messenger stepped inside. "Last radiogram for the night, sir," and he handed us a manifold copy.

I glanced over it, read off the football scores, and then a paragraph detached itself and stood out from the paper with the sharpness of a bayonet edge. I read it slowly, and again the

lap-lap of the sea outside came into the quiet of the wardroom.

WASHINGTON.—The name of Captain Stephen Cranston was restored to the list of the marine corps to-day by the order of President Wilson. Captain Cranston was dropped as a deserter in the Philippines several months ago. In the capture of Salingan in June by the forces under General Derrick, recently promoted, Cranston, then serving with the insurrectos as a head priest of the Katipunan, fired the magazine of the fortress. He was afterward fatally shot while entering the American lines under cover of darkness, but brought with him documents that resulted in the utter extermination of the once powerful secret society. The chief of the bureau of insular affairs has just discovered evidence that clearly shows Cranston deserted to join the Katipunan and await his first opportunity to rejoin the service with the information thus gained. His body will be interred at Arlington on Wednesday with unusual military honors. Congress voted Captain Cranston a medal of honor to-day, overriding for the first time the absence of authority in law under which naval and marine officers are not eligible to receive it, although the enlisted men of those services and the officers and men of the army are.

"I'll take back what I said about Congress to-night," apologized Hallowell. "They carried away the whole target, raft, screen, and all on that shot."

SLIDING TO BASE

ON many days Ty Cobb does not come on the field for preliminary practice, delaying his appearance until within a few minutes of the beginning of the game—often not until the ump is dusting off the plate. Manager Jennings knows his reason and approves. Ty believes that if he went out for fielding practice he would exert himself to partial exhaustion before the game began. Jennings knows that the chance of Cobb making a costly error in the first inning because of lack of practice is very remote; and Cobb, batting third, always gets an opportunity to limber up his muscles in the Detroit half of the first inning. Away from home this opportunity comes before he goes into the field at all.

Cobb never loafs on a play, nor does he ever play for his personal advantage, but for what his efforts will bring to his team.

He never appears at the Tiger training camp in the spring, because if he did he would play championship ball from the minute he got inside a uniform, and therefore probably would go stale before the league season was half finished. Nor would he be in as good condition to start the season, for he would be injured.

Because of the lithe movements of Cobb, most spectators think that he never is hurt. But Cobb is never without injury from the time he plays his first exhibition game in the spring until the world's series is ended in the autumn—whether he plays in the big classic or not, his injuries outlast it. Those somersault catches he makes in the field are not done on a velvet mattress. The lawn is not as smooth and soft as it looks from the stands, and a ball player who slides on his head on it comes up with various abrasions, to say nothing of twisted arms and legs and wrenched muscles due to the contortions of the fall entailed by picking the ball off the tips of the grass blades. Cobb does those things in almost every game. He does not always get the ball, but he tries desperately. These performances and his sliding to bases, constantly repeated, reopen the old wounds and add new ones day after day. In order that he may start the season with a comparatively whole skin, he does not go to camp. He does not need to, for he always is in condition, anyway.

Kings of the Mighty

By W. E. Scutt

The biggest thing in Wall Street since '93 is on the eve of being sprung upon the millionaires who get their money by squeezing the poor devils that earn it, when a hidden hand intervenes and the genius who plans the coup is swept aside. Whose was the hand that intervened at the moment when the big-hearted master of finance was about to win the greatest victory of his battle-scarred life?

(In Two Parts—Part One.)

CHAPTER I.

THE TROUBLE MAKER.

THE telephone pealed insistently. With a gesture of impatience, Jim Webb pushed back the sheaf of papers covered with countless figures and calculations, snapped shut the two great books of statistics before him, and covered the papers with them, threw off his green eyeshade, and walked wearily out into the hall of his bachelor apartment to the telephone.

It was just midnight of a sultry midsummer night. Since seven o'clock Webb had been sitting in the selfsame position working steadily at the selfsame task, digging out the great rows of figures that were intended to startle Wall Street before the week was out—intended to, but destined not to. And now, though he was impatient at the interruption, nevertheless he welcomed the brief respite which the telephone heralded.

He caught the receiver off the hook. "Well?" he said.

The voice of the hallboy came to him over the phone: "Mr. Turner to see you, sir—Mr. Edward Turner."

Webb's face clouded. He knew Eddie Turner of old—knew him too well. Cousins by adoption, they were; that is, Turner's uncle had adopted Webb when he was but a toddling orphan, the sole bequest to the world of an unfortunate business associate. The two cousins had grown up together, had gone through college together, and had roomed together during that first year when both were gaining a toehold in New York.

Consequently Webb knew Turner thoroughly; knew him as a suave, polished, even brilliant man whom every one liked at first sight, and continued to like so long as Turner could manage to conceal his real character; knew him as a spineless, untrustworthy profligate—a moral imbecile of good intentions, actuated solely by his passions, whether good or bad.

"Tell him I'm up to the eyes in work. Ask him to come to the office to-morrow," was Webb's instant reply.

He heard the message repeated. The hallboy spoke again: "He says it's most important—a question of life and death almost, and can't possibly wait till to-morrow."

Webb shrugged his shoulders slightly

in resignation. He had no idea what trouble Turner was in now—what was his latest escapade—but he felt that he owed it to the Turner family to find out so much, at least, and do what he could. "All right, Sam. Send him up."

He hung up the receiver, walked back to his desk to see if his papers were well concealed from prying eyes, and crossed the room to the windows that were thrown wide open to catch the faint breeze from the wooded Palisades across the river, the only alleviation to the stifling heat that simmered up from the pavements.

As he leaned wearily against the window frame, the sounds of the city arose to him in a muffled and confused rumble: the distant thunder of a subway train; the screech and rattle of trolley cars; perpetual blasts from automobile horns; the constant put-put of launches on the river; and, nearer than anything else, in the park that skirted the river at his very feet, the droning talk and the scuffling footsteps of myriads of flat dwellers, who found sleep impossible in their ovenlike rooms, and lolled on the grass in perspiring abandon of dress.

As he listened, he felt a sense of elation, the pride of overwhelming achievement. Before the week was out, every one of the millions of atoms of this teeming human hive would be talking in bated breath of his work—his—although the figurehead, the man who got the credit or the curses, was another.

Jim Webb was private secretary and general factotum to Rufus McIntyre, a man of millions untold and unguessed, a man who precipitated panics and launched booms almost at will, the most powerful operator in Wall Street, and at the same time the most reckless and daring plunger. This, he knew, was the outside world's opinion; this, and more. For, when the pinch of panic was upon them, when banks went down like cardboard doll houses in a wind, factories closed their doors, and famine was as real and as imminent as during the Seven Lean Years, then did these millions of souls see McIntyre as a shadowy, destructive Behemoth, or a great grim demigod who could save them if he willed.

It was McIntyre's name which was lauded when things went well; McIntyre's name which was cursed when things went badly. But lately—it was now five years that Webb had been with McIntyre—Webb had furnished the brains and was never heard of, while McIntyre furnished the money, and the nerve, and was, at times, the most-talked-of man on two continents. And Webb was satisfied with the arrangement; his reward came from within and not from without.

This particular coup Webb had planned and suggested to McIntyre. McIntyre, in a rare moment of expressed emotion, stamped it as the crowning impudence of his tempestuous career, praised himself for thinking of it at all, and requested Webb to work out the details. It was a propitious time: midsummer, when the market is dull, professional speculators apathetic, and the investing public otherwise engaged. If the thing could be fairly launched before any one suspected it, the battle was half won, and two trunk lines of railways would be in the control of Rufus McIntyre before the week was out.

Rumors had been bruited about, though totally unfounded, that the department of justice had been smelling about the Vanastor railroad ring, of which the M., K. & T. was a small but excellent property, seldom speculated in. By careful maneuvering, McIntyre had got control of enough of this stock to be safe in selling short to almost any amount. If he could dump this on the market and pound the price down thirty

points or so before the big men realized what was up, and could rush in to save the slaughter, the public confidence in the Vanastor holdings, already undermined by the rumors of legal interference, must be entirely sapped, and great bunches of stock in their two biggest trunk lines dumped upon the market for the picking up at almost any price.

While the railroad ring, its present credit in jeopardy because of the loss of public confidence in its holdings, could not avail itself to any extent of the low prices, McIntyre could step in and take what he wanted at his own price. And ultimately it was only the ring itself that would suffer. But the success of the coup depended utterly upon the unexpectedness, the swiftness, and the ruthlessness of that pounding down of M., K. & T.

Webb owned himself slightly startled by the insistence of the doorbell, so unlike was it to Turner's usual soft and unobtrusive ring; and he realized that the situation he faced was just so much graver. He threw the door open wide. Turner hesitated a moment on the threshold with a low-voiced "Hello, Jim," as if he were estimating the warmth of his welcome, and entered the room.

As they faced one another, one might notice that the two men were nearly equal in height. Webb, however, was spare and angular, with that slight stoop to his shoulders that comes from unremitting application to work over a desk; whereas Turner was thickset, erect, with a frame that might have been called powerful had it not been so evidently flabby and soft. Turner had blue eyes and dark hair, a plump, red face, with skin as soft as a girl's, pursy red lips, and a tip-tilted nose. Webb's countenance was of the more virile stamp, rugged, with high cheek bones, deep-set gray eyes, and a nose inclined to the Roman. From an æsthetic point of view, Jim Webb was not good to look upon; but his very ugliness, shadowing forth, as it did, the type of man he was, was in itself attractive.

Webb closed the door, and faced about into the room, his feet set wide apart, his hands clasped behind his back. "'Lo, Eddie," he said carelessly.

Meantime, Turner had dropped into an easy-chair, and lighted a cigarette.

"Hot night, Jim," he commented, exhaling an immense cloud of tobacco smoke, and fanning himself with his straw hat.

"It is, decidedly." Webb's posture did not change; he was aloofness itself.

Young Turner puffed vigorously at his cigarette. "I'm in a very deuce of a fix, Jim," he said presently.

"I thought as much," was Webb's rejoinder. "It's not the first time, either."

"Not the first—but yet the worst." Turner laughed a little uneasily. "In fact, Jim, I can't see any way out of this. They'll get me sure, unless you can help me some way."

"They—who?"

"The company."

"The company's money this time, eh?" Wrath and scorn tinged Webb's speech. Through some strong influence, Turner had been made treasurer and sales manager of a real-estate firm that dealt largely in suburban properties.

"Uh—uh."

"How much are you short?"

"Fourteen thousand." Turner spoke the words carelessly.

"Fourteen—what?" Webb took three strides to where Turner lolled in the easy-chair.

"Thousands—fourteen thousands—dollars, not cents. A few hundreds, perhaps, one way or the other; not enough to count, really."

Incensed almost beyond control at Turner's lackadaisical air, Webb glared at him a second; then turned in silence and began to pace up and down the

room. Turner's eyes followed him, principally when Webb was not looking.

Webb stopped suddenly, directly in front of Turner. "Why did you come to me?" he snapped.

"I dunno. Because I didn't have any other place to go, I suppose. Accounting due Saturday. If they find me out, it's all up with me. Up the river for mine, I reckon."

"How on earth did you manage to get away with a sum like that?" asked Webb.

"Stock market. If you'd given me some of the tips you must have known, I'd have come out all right."

"I'd hold my job just three minutes if I handed around indiscriminate tips," was Webb's preoccupied response. "McIntyre trusts me to that extent. Have you written to your father?"

"What's the use of that?" demanded Turner crabbedly. "He told me once he'd never help me out of another scrape; and you know him as well as I do, Jim. Besides——"

Webb interrupted passionately: "Besides, you have already stripped him of every cent he can reasonably spare. Fourteen thousand would send him to the poorhouse! No, that's out of the question." Webb fell again to pacing the floor.

"So I thought," affirmed Turner.

"It's high time you learned your lesson, Eddie," Webb went on, after another period of silence. "In fact, I don't see how it can be avoided."

"Don't say that," whined Turner. "There must be some way out of it, Jim. If I could only borrow it of some one, I could pay it back in a year, and I swear I'd be straight henceforth."

"You—pay it back in a year, on a salary of two thousand. Get some common sense into your nut!"

"I mean it, Jim. I've never told you my expectations, because—well—because."

"What expectations have you got? What's that you never told me about?"

"About Muriel French. I never mentioned it to you, because I knew you were interested in her, too. But since it's come out, I may as well tell you that I expect to marry her before the year is out. And she's got scads of money, or her father has."

Webb faced about toward Turner, his lips drawn white and straight. No one but himself knew how vitally he was interested in Muriel French. And he had flattered himself, cajoled himself into thinking that she was not averse to his attentions. Now he saw things suddenly in a clearer light. He knew that he was awkward of tongue with women, ungainly of bearing in their presence, and could spare but little time from business for their companionship. And Muriel French had so many ardent admirers—men like Eddie Turner, affable, well poised, brilliant in small talk. He had thought, blindly, that these things did not count with Muriel French; now suddenly his eyes were opened.

He did not speak until his voice was under control. "Are you engaged?"

"Tacitly. She wants to wait a while before any public announcement is made, but it's as good as fixed. The old man's agreeable, too. What if she knew this?" Turner grinned sardonically.

For one second Webb felt his self-control slipping away from him. Fate had thrown the trump card into his hand; with Eddie Turner known publicly for what he was, as he deserved, his own chances were bettered twenty-fold. But the Turners——

"Yes, you'd be finished in that quarter if she found this out," he found himself saying. "I am interested there, Eddie, more than you know. But we'll fight it out fairly. Now, as to this matter. If you expected to borrow the money, why did you come to me? I

don't possess a tenth part of that sum. I've been paying your uncle back, as you know."

"Do you mean to say, with all your tips on the market, that you never make anything?" Turner's surprise may or may not have been feigned; certain he was that Webb never played.

"I never speculate. Mainly on principle; partly because McIntyre doesn't want me to—knows I won't. I thought you knew that."

"No, I didn't know," Turner replied dubiously. "Perhaps, with your name as security, McIntyre might let me have it."

"That's out of the question. He's not that kind of a philanthropist. He'd laugh me in the face, and be right in doing so. And, what's more, I wouldn't ask him."

"No, I suppose not, seeing how interested you are in a certain young lady," Turner said, with a sneer.

Again the color surged from Webb's lips. "Turner," he said, in a voice that trembled, "that's a dirty slam, and you know it. By rights, I ought to throw you out of here. I ought to call up the president of your company, and tell him the whole thing. You deserve five years in prison, and, under any other circumstances, I'd be glad to see you get the lesson. But if you think for one minute I'd go back on you for the sake of having a clearer field with Miss French, you're greatly mistaken. Let me think a minute."

Immensely satisfied with his little stratagem, unfair advantage though it had been, Turner sat and puffed his cigarette in silence, sure now that Webb would find a way out of it for him.

Finally Jim spoke: "Everything considered, there's only one way out of it, so far as I can see. I can't lend you the money to straighten you out, nor can I get it for you from any one I know. For the first and last time, I'm going to give you a market tip that's a sure thing if Rufus McIntyre lives till Saturday morning. I ought to play it myself for you, and not let you into it, but there's the strictest rule against brokers' employees playing the market. Whom do you deal through, anyway?"

"Spedding & Co."

"They're all right. Listen. I'm taking a great risk of putting myself in bad forever; it practically amounts to betraying a trust. But I'll take that risk if you'll only be square with me. I've stood up for you when everybody else said you were crooked, and this time I think you'll be straight. If you mention this to a soul, even breathe a hint of it, it'll upset a big thing and ruin me forever. Give me your word that it'll be absolutely confidential with you."

"I promise," murmured Turner. "What is it?"

"Have you got any money at all?"

"About twenty dollars, all told."

"Well, I've got eighteen hundred I'll let you have—a loan. Put it on M., K. & W. to drop. Pyramid it right, and if Rufus McIntyre lives till Saturday morning, you'll have roughly twenty thousand. Do you understand?"

"Sure thing."

"Deal through Spedding & Co. and no one else. And, above all, don't tell Spedding where the tip came from. They'll laugh at you, and try to argue you out of it. Let 'em laugh, and don't explain. Your word on that."

"You have it, Jim." Turner's face glowed like the noonday sun.

"I'll give you my check now." Webb sat down and wrote out the check, and breathed a sigh of relief when Turner's fat fingers closed over the yellow slip.

"Thank you very much, Jim," he said. "It's a great weight off my mind. I'll be off now. I'll hand you back the eighteen hundred Saturday without fail. Good night."

Turner sidled hurriedly through the door, after a glance at his watch. Webb returned to his desk, opened up his

books, and tried to work. But in this attempt he failed. He leaned his head forward on his desk, and sat long, wrapped in thought.

Could he trust Eddie Turner, after all?

CHAPTER II.

THE DAY AFTER.

It was Monday night that Eddie Turner sought help from Jim Webb and found it. On the following morning, Tuesday, Mr. Leonard French keyed himself up to make an important and difficult request of his daughter Muriel.

From the time he doffed his silk pajamas for the morning bath, until he studied with satisfaction his completed and exquisite toilet, giving a final twist to the ends of his silky mustache, and a final painstaking arrangement of his pitifully few hairs so that the pink shining skin underneath might not glitter so conspicuously, his mind was utterly preoccupied with thinking out what he had to say, and no less the manner of saying it.

For Miss Muriel had, to his way of thinking, an overdeveloped sense of personal honor; a temperament that was caprice itself, so that one never knew exactly how to take her; an intuition that was quick and sure, so that subterfuge, to be successful with her, must be subtle indeed. Yet as he surveyed himself—roseate, beaming, well groomed, very much the elegant man of the world, he felt strongly girt for the struggle and confident of success.

He descended leisurely to the dining room. He had had, to be exact, two spoonfuls of grapefruit, and had skimmed the headlines on the first page of the morning paper, when Muriel came down, like a merry sprite on a beam of sunlight. They greeted one another with affection, and Muriel sat down opposite her father.

"You were horribly late last night, daddy," she began in mock complaint. "Don't you think you owe me an explanation?"

"Business, my dear, business," laughed Mr. French, appraising her keenly, with a fuller appreciation of her charms than he had ever before experienced. Here was bait to tempt St. Anthony. If only he could gain her consent to his scheme, how easy it would be! If only his intended victim could see her now as he saw her—graceful, animated, bewitching, sitting just where the sun could gleam on the golden mass of her hair, and color the creamy softness of her cheek a deeper pink! Her blue eyes sparkled with health and humor. Her lips, parted in a merry smile, disclosed perfect, dazzling teeth.

Mr. French continued hastily, lest she might read what was passing in his mind: "It was really most important business, Muriel. I've been having many reverses lately. If luck doesn't change soon, we'll have to begin to curtail expenses."

"I don't quite understand," said Muriel, with a puzzled air. "I thought your income was assured, quite independent of reverses."

"I know. But I've been trying to increase it. I felt it wasn't large enough for you. In fact, Muriel, I've been thinking a lot about you lately. Let's see; you're past twenty, aren't you?"

"Marvelous memory! I didn't think you knew, really."

Mr. French overlooked her levity. "And you'll soon be thinking of getting married, I suppose."

A shade of displeasure marred Muriel's face. "Perhaps—perhaps not," she said. "Who knows?"

"I see young Webb about a great deal—McIntyre's secretary. He's a coming man, Muriel, a man who's going to make his mark—a man at the very fountainhead of big things."

"I always thought you were rather

partial to one Edward Turner," objected Muriel nonchalantly.

"Not exactly. He's nice enough, so far as that goes, but lately I—in fact, our relations of late have been far from smooth."

"Why, only day before yesterday you two were thick as thieves. What's the trouble so suddenly?"

"I can't very well explain. To be perfectly frank, I'm through with him."

"And that means I must be?"

"I'd hardly go so far as that—in the sense of a command. I'd like, though, to have you see as much of young Webb as you can. It would be most valuable to me to have McIntyre's chief man a member of the family."

"Doubtless."

"That, however, is a future consideration," went on Mr. French, unruffled by his daughter's mild sarcasm. "For the present, there is something on hand of greater importance. I wish you would invite Webb to dine with us tonight, somewhere, and perhaps take in a roof-garden show afterward, or come back here for a hand of auction."

"Exactly why?"

"To cultivate his acquaintance."

"And——" incisively.

"And what, my dear Muriel?" His eyebrows arched in mild surprise.

"And what else? There's something back of it, I dare say."

"One of the few times your marvelous intuition has betrayed you into error," rolled glibly from Mr. French's tongue, so that his comment lost sarcasm. "In a sense, though, there is something back of it. Webb is working very hard, and it will be a godsend to him to get out with us, and enjoy life for a change. And it'll be a little lively for you in the midst of this dullness. Say you will, Muriel."

Muriel pondered. She was aware, of course, that there was a deeper motive in her father's sudden interest in Webb. But she knew that Webb was amply able to take care of himself. It would really be a great pleasure for her to have a jolly evening with him.

"Yes, papa, I'll invite him," she promised at last. "I want it understood beforehand, however, that there'll be no business talked before me."

"Most assuredly not. Wouldn't think of such a thing."

Whereupon she raced eagerly into the hall to telephone Jim Webb before he should leave for the office. Mr. French watched with a countenance not quite clear. He had not gained as much as he had hoped to; still, so much was better than nothing. It was wiser to assure himself of that small advantage, rather than insist upon a greater one, incur her suspicion, fail to get her permission to dine with Webb that night, and lose what little advantage he had won.

Minutes later she came flying back. "He says he'll come," she announced. "I'm to telephone later about arrangements. Where shall we dine?"

Mr. French thought a moment. "The Monico?" he suggested.

"As good as any place," she affirmed.

He could not conceal a smile of gratification. Though she did not know it, she had unwittingly given him further ascendancy over Jim Webb; for French knew the maître d'hôtel at the Monico as well as he knew his own butler, and Jules could help him in many covert ways.

And so, in high fettle, and with a leave-taking of his daughter that seemed fonder than usual, Leonard French ordered his car out and set off for downtown, passing by the Monico to order dinner.

He was well known at the Monico, one of the largest and gayest restaurants in the white-light district. He sought the maître d'hôtel, and was received by that dignitary in his private office.

Jules—no one knew him by any other

name—rose to meet his valued patron with much unctuous handrubbing. A man of indefinite nationality—probably from the south of France or from the Swiss border—he had lived in America so long that he was forced to ape foreign mannerisms to maintain his dignity as a foreigner. He was short, black of hair and eyes, swarthy of skin, fat, and most indubitably decorous of demeanor, always deferent without losing his air of superiority over his patrons. Tales were current of a fortune he had piled up in tips; of his intended return to his native land with wealth greater than that of any local prince's. But these were only rumors, for Jules continued patiently and well to serve rich New Yorkers, to give them epicurean feasts, and to pocket princely gratuities.

"Ah, Monsieur French, this is indeed a pleasure," he said. "And so early, after last night." He smiled slyly.

"By George, it was a stormy session, Jules. Young Turner didn't get in till after midnight, or we'd have got away earlier." Mr. French dropped confidentially into a chair, while Jules sat gingerly upon the edge of his desk. "That young fellow'll come a cropper before long."

"He likes his wine," Jules admitted diplomatically.

"How long did he stay after I went?"

"I really could not say. He was in a most deplorable state. But there. I must apologize. Such matters a servant should see without seeing. Monsieur doubtless had some orders?"

Mr. French waxed confidential; he laid his hand persuasively upon Jules' forearm. "Tell me, Jules. Did Turner talk any before he left? You know what I mean—business."

"No—I'm quite sure he did not. Is there another dinner to-night?"

French scrutinized the little foreigner keenly, but got no additional information from his unusually impassive face. "Yes," he said at last. "I want you to fix me up something special for to-night."

"But certainly. It is done." The maître d'hôtel caught up a pencil and a small pad. "Has the monsieur any suggestions?"

"I'll leave it all to you, Jules. But you must do yourself proud. There'll be three of us, my daughter, and Mr. Webb, secretary to old McIntyre."

A glimmer of recognition passed over Jules' graven face. "Ah, you mean Mr. McIntyre—the Wall Street—how do you say—gambler."

"Precisely. Now fix up the very best dinner you can conjure up. Webb's a careful, close-mouthed individual. I want to warm him up, to put him in good form, make him genial, you understand. Give me the very best you can—a little better than anything you ever did before."

"Assuredly. It shall be as monsieur wishes. You shall have a dinner that would make madame, the Sphinx, babble like a babe in arms. Leave it to Jules, monsieur, and you shall be satisfied."

"Good! I knew you'd do it. Have it for seven-thirty prompt."

Jules bowed Mr. French out of his office, and watched the dapper, well-tailored back as it swung jauntily toward the door. Then he turned back into his sanctum, the suspicion of a sneer on his face.

"Another victim, eh? Ah, what a game it is!"

Whereupon, he fell to plotting the menu.

CHAPTER III.

A HIDDEN HAND.

Jim Webb was too busy during Tuesday to feel either regret for the unfortunate impasse into which Eddie Turner had forced him, or the pleasure of anticipation of the evening with Muriel French; though early that morning

he had felt both poignantly. The entire morning he had spent in going over the daring campaign with McIntyre, presenting to him clearly and in careful detail what he had taken so much pains to work out.

The old war horse, usually chary of praise, grew enthusiastic as Webb proceeded, and outdid himself in laudatory comment.

"Great Jupiter, Jim," he exclaimed. "It's the biggest thing Wall Street has seen since ninety-three. By the time the 'Change closes Saturday noon, old McIntyre'll be cussed from one end to the other of this bloomin' country."

"By the big interests, yes," admitted Jim. "None of the smaller fry will have any cause to complain."

"That's the beauty of it. Sting those that can afford it, say I. They got their money by squeezing the poor devils that earned it; now I'll take it away from them. It's a case of wits against wits. Nothing but Providence can save 'em now. If we're still alive, Saturday, a good many of these upstart millionaires'll be looking for a job—glad to peel potatoes in a Third Avenue quick-lunch joint."

There was much more of the same kind of talk, continuing even after lunch until late in the afternoon, until every move had been blocked out beforehand, and the machinery of the campaign was ready to be set in motion as soon as the Stock Exchange opened on the morrow.

By dint of much hurrying, Webb arrived in the lobby of the Monico on the dot of seven-thirty. Mr. French and Muriel were five minutes late—a little strategic trait of his, so that the warmth of the necessary apology might thaw any restraint. Muriel was more reserved, and her coloring a trifle accentuated by the gown she wore—a peculiar, but strikingly becoming hue of pale green—so that there was a uniform movement of eyes, masculine as well as feminine, in their direction, as Jules piloted the trio to the table reserved for them.

"I trust, monsieur, that everything will be satisfactory," Jules found occasion to whisper in Mr. French's ear.

"Sure to be," was the hearty reply. And, as the dinner progressed, French, experienced epicure though he was, declared to himself that this time Jules had surpassed all his previous efforts.

Under the bewitching influence of Miss Muriel's presence and vivacious conversation, and the exhilaration of rare vintages and rarer gastronomic delicacies, Webb seemed to become another man, blithe, gay, jovial, with never a thought for business cares.

Enter suddenly a page in gaudy buttoned uniform, who nudged French's elbow, but looked across toward Webb. "Mr. Webb wanted on the telephone," he said.

"Who is it?" demanded Webb, a trifle impatient at the interruption.

"I didn't catch the name—they said it was important."

Webb excused himself for a moment, and hurried out to a phone booth. "Hello! Who's this?"

"This is Roberts, sir."

"Roberts? I don't understand."

"Mr. McIntyre's butler," explained the voice in measured cadence. "Mr. McIntyre has just had an important message, and has left for the office. He had no time to find you, and desired me to trace you, and request you to come to the office without delay. He impressed it upon me, sir—without delay!"

"He said nothing else? Made no explanation?" Webb, loath to tear himself away from so enjoyable a party, hoped, possibly, to find a loophole of escape from the summons.

"Nothing else, sir. You have the message just as I received it."

"Oh, well, thanks. I'll go right down. I suppose I'd better telephone first."

"As you like, sir. He cannot have arrived yet, however, so there will be no one in the office."

"That's so. I hadn't thought of that." Webb rang off, and returned disconsolately to the table.

"I'm mortally sorry," he said, looking at Muriel. "It's certainly something grave, or Mr. McIntyre never would have returned to the office at this time of day or night—much less calling me down there. I really must ask to be excused."

Mr. French stared at the younger man, his features working as under the stress of some unholy emotion; Webb, looking past him toward his daughter, did not notice it.

"Too bad, Webb," said French, after an interval. "No one can be sorrier than I am. But I suppose it can't be helped. If you must go, you must, and I shan't be the one to detain you."

Miss Muriel's regrets seemed to Webb more sincere than her father's, and therefore it was the harder to take leave of her. However, he managed to tear himself away without further loss of time, and took the subway downtown. Something appeared to be wrong with the line. The train crawled, with frequent stops between stations, that exasperated Webb beyond expression. When finally they reached Wall Street, he learned from his watch that he had taken more than half an hour in coming from Times Square. And that in the face of McIntyre's insistent summons.

He raced up the subway steps, and shot up in the elevator of the office building to the eighteenth floor. Light shone through the ground-glass windows of the office. Webb rapped softly. There was no response. He opened the door with a pass-key, and as the door swung back he caught a clear view of the luxurious inner room that McIntyre made his private office. The man sat at his desk, but in an attitude so peculiar that Webb sprang forward in alarm.

Rufus McIntyre was dead—shot down on the eve of the greatest victory in his battle-scarred life. His powerful, grizzled head had fallen forward on the desk; the great body lay relaxed, an inert, lifeless mass.

Webb was appalled—overwhelmed by the confusing rush of thoughts. And oddly enough, his most vivid idea was that Eddie Turner, after all, must pay the penalty for his indiscretion; for, with McIntyre dead, the daring coup must come to nothing. Later he began to wonder who had done it, and why, and how. For what must have been a full minute, while these thoughts were rioting through his brain, Webb stood in the doorway of the inner office, and stared vacantly.

As he looked about, his eye fell upon a revolver lying under a chair, half concealed, against the wall nearest him. He picked it up. It was an ordinary gun, thirty-eight caliber, with one cartridge only in the cylinder, and that one discharged. Holding it still in his hand, he moved across the room toward the open window, before which McIntyre leaned upon his desk.

He forced himself to overcome his instinctive aversion, and examined the body. The mortal wound was on the left side, next the window; the bullet had entered near the bottom of the breast pocket of his coat, and had plowed its way direct to the heart.

Gently he touched the pitiable form, for he had loved McIntyre more, perhaps, than any other man on earth.

Came the sound of rushing feet; hoarse cries of "Murder." Webb straightened up and faced about, the revolver still clutched in his hand. Three men rushed into the room through the door he had left open.

"Murder, yes," began Webb, "and a most dastardly——" But he was instantly and unexpectedly interrupted by the concerted attack of the three. To a man they sprang upon him, caught

him off his guard, and overpowered him before he knew what was happening. "Hold on, there," he panted, breathless from the struggle. "I'm not the man you want."

"So *you* say," sneered one of the men. "The chair for yours, young feller, so the less you say the better for you."

At first Webb was inclined to smile at their mistake, but later he became too astounded to explain matters. The more he saw, the more evidently was their procedure preconcerted and methodical. One of them ripped off a belt, and bound his arms fast behind him. This done, the same man stepped to the telephone and called the police station; and all this without suggestion or word from the others, without the slightest show of excitement or of emotion which the circumstances justified. Such procedure was strange beyond belief. Webb shuddered as he realized the hideous import of it.

In silence he listened to his denunciation over the phone to the police station: "Rufus McIntyre has been shot down in his office, Real Estate Securities Building. We caught the man practically red-handed, and have got him tied up in the office. Hurry around a couple of your best men." The man who spoke thus listened a moment to the reply from the station, and then hung up the receiver. This done, he drew out three cigars, gave two to his associates, and began to smoke calmly.

"Putting up a job on me, eh?" suggested Webb from his prostrate position on the floor.

The man stared at him, and made no reply. Nor did Webb pursue the matter further. His conclusion was right; there was no doubt of that. And he would find it a hard task to clear himself. It all depended on what they told the police.

Webb studied the three. The chief of the gang had every appearance of the prosperous, decent man of business, well groomed, well fed, respectable. The other two were of another class, neither as well dressed nor as respectable in appearance. One of them might have come straight from a Bowery lodging house. The other was of the type of the swaggering, cocksure foreigner.

Barely ten minutes passed—ten minutes of absolute silence, when the police came, a lieutenant and two plain-clothes men. The officer absorbed the situation quickly, deliberately overlooked Webb, and began to question the trio.

The chief acted as spokesman for the party, and his story, in brief, was this: He was a real-estate operator, with offices on that floor, just around the corner of the corridor. The two men, his companions, had called on him by appointment that evening, with regard to buying a property. As they discussed business, they were distracted by the sounds of a violent quarrel in some office near by. A revolver shot cracked out suddenly. They ran out into the corridor to see what was up. McIntyre's door stood open, and, as they entered, they found this young fellow standing over McIntyre, the gun clutched in his hand. That was all he had to say, except that all three were ready and willing to appear and take oath to their story at any time.

The perilousness of his predicament came as a shock to Webb. He foresaw the trial—his sole testimony against that of three disinterested citizens, whose story the defense would have small chance of shaking. It was possible—though not probable, in Jim's opinion, that they had actually heard the sounds they declared they heard, and the murderer had got away before Webb arrived at the office. But, on recalling the circumstances, Webb knew this was utterly impossible; and with the realization of this, he began to plan his defense—an iron-clad, indisputable defense that might even save him from

the disgrace of being arrested, if the lieutenant of police happened to be a decent sort of man.

The lieutenant's voice aroused him. "Snap the irons on, McCarthy, and bring him along."

Then Webb spoke up for himself: "Just one minute, lieutenant, please."

The officer looked at him disdainfully. "Well, what do you want? You'd better keep your mouth shut."

"My name's Webb," continued Jim. "I was McIntyre's secretary——"

"I don't care who you are. We'll find that out at headquarters. Get a move on, McCarthy." He started toward the door, and one of the plain-clothes men drew out handcuffs.

"You'll be broke for this, lieutenant," Webb snapped angrily. "These men here are putting up a job on me. If you let 'em escape, you'll lose every clew to the murderer. I'd advise you, for your own good, to listen to me and arrest every man of that gang."

In a moment of indecision, the officer looked from Webb to the three men. Webb saw in the faces of the two underlings plain signs of terror; the chief of them preserved perfect equanimity. He stepped up to the lieutenant, and held his wrists out tragically. "Here, lieutenant, snap 'em on," he said, with a laugh.

His audacity carried the day against Webb. McCarthy, who had awaited the last word from the lieutenant, closed the handcuffs about Webb's wrists, and the cavalcade started off—prisoner, police, and witnesses.

At the station, after Webb's pedigree had been taken, and he was ordered locked up for a hearing in the morning, he voiced his suspicions of the trio once more. But the captain at the desk would have none of it, and released the three on their promise to appear against the prisoner in the police court on the morrow.

Webb made a last stand; he demanded the right to communicate with counsel, and to his surprise was permitted to telephone.

"Give me Mr. Palmer's apartment," he cried into the transmitter, as soon as he had got the number.

The lieutenant, who stood close by, heard the number and the name. "Say, what's the game here?" he demanded. "Is that Samuel D. Palmer you're askin' for?"

"Yes," Webb admitted carelessly.

"Swell chance you've got o' gettin' any help from him. He's an assistant district attorney."

"He's the man I want, nevertheless." Some one lifted the receiver at the other end of the line, and a man's voice came to Webb. "Hello, Sam, is this you?" he asked.

"They've arrested me for the murder of Rufus McIntyre," Webb went on, "and won't listen to plain common sense. Can you come right down to headquarters? I'm a fixture here for the night, I suppose, but I want to put you wise to a few facts that'll quash the case against me to-morrow."

The answer was evidently satisfactory, for Webb smiled broadly as he hung up the instrument. The two officers looked quizzically at him, but vouchsafed no comment. Then the lieutenant led Webb back and locked him in a cell.

"Good night, lieutenant, and pleasant dreams," Webb called sarcastically. "You'll give a month's pay to live to-night over again."

CHAPTER IV.

A MERCILESS INTERRUPTION.

Fraught with anxiety, with nerves on the ragged edge, Muriel French shuddered at the ominous peal of the door-bell; for Leonard French invariably let himself in with a pass-key. A rapid, half-terrified glance at the clock told her that it was past two. And yet no

news of her father, unless the stranger at the door at this time of night——

The butler announced Mr. Edward Turner. Muriel knew not whether to be relieved or worried the more. "He says it's most important," the butler added apologetically.

"I'll be down at once, Perkins," she promised, with a quick glance in the mirror.

In the drawing-room she found Turner pacing the floor, utterly unstrung, with an unearthly pallor and an uncanny, hunted look in his eyes as if he had had a glimpse of things denied to human vision. She caught her breath at the sight of him.

"You have news of father?" she managed to say, as she stepped inside the room.

He faced about sharply. "No. I came to see him. Where is he?"

"I wish I knew. I've been waiting for him ever since I left the restaurant, hours and hours ago—it seems a week." She dropped into a chair and stared wonderingly at Turner who, his urbanity and courtliness cast aside and forgotten, glared at her like some beast at bay.

"Tell me about it, for the love of Heaven! Where do you think I could find him? I must see him at once, in ten minutes—in less time."

"Unless you sit down and act like a sane being, I shall ring for Perkins," threatened Muriel, really alarmed at Turner's half-demented demeanor.

Turner flopped heavily into a chair, passing his hand wearily over his forehead. "I suppose I am acting the fool, Miss French, but so would any man under the circumstances."

"What circumstances? What has happened?"

"Don't ask me. It's too horrible to tell. I've been a fool and must pay, I suppose. But what about your father? I must see him."

"I haven't seen him or heard from him since before nine to-night. We were dining at the Monico with Mr. Webb——"

Turner started out of his chair again. "Dining at the Monico—with Jim Webb?" he interrupted in an unsteady voice.

"Yes. Why not? Is there any reason why we should not have done so?"

"No, none, of course not. Go on!"

"We'd just about half finished when a message came for Mr. Webb, requesting him to come down to his office at once. It seemed to be most important, for he hurried off at once. Papa was most unaccountably upset by it, though he wouldn't explain why. No sooner had Mr. Webb left the dining room than papa said he must go, too. I suspect, for some reason, he followed Mr. Webb; though I can't see why he should. He wouldn't even wait to see me started safely home. And when at last I got into the street, I found that he had taken a taxi, and left me the car. He promised to be back in an hour, and here are five hours gone and no word from him. I'm nearly distracted, considering everything."

Turner leaped from the chair. "And you're not apt to see him for some time, either, if that's the case. I'm off." The last words he flung over his shoulder from halfway down the stairs.

His consummate brutality stunned her, rendered her for a moment incapable of action; and by the time she reached the stairway, wildly demanding an explanation, the great front door had slammed behind him, and he was gone.

She returned to her vigil. Perkins, tiptoeing in at dawn to turn the lights off, found her sleeping fitfully in a chair. The morning paper was under his arm. He opened it up, read the glaring headlines, and looked compassionately at the girl. He hesitated in indecision, tucked the paper under his arm again, returned to the door, and

stopped there, looking back into the room. And then at last he resolutely laid the paper on a table and left the room, closing the door gently after him. Perhaps it was better for her to know at once.

Subconsciously awakened, she stirred uneasily. "Perkins," she called, sitting upright in her chair.

The door opened noiselessly, and the butler returned.

"Have you heard anything at all?" she demanded anxiously.

"Nothing at all."

"It's odd it didn't occur to me before," she said hopefully, "but Mr. Webb must know where he is—something about him, at any rate. Get him on the phone, and connect it to my room."

Perkins hesitated. "I—I fear very much that—that Mr. Webb wouldn't be in," he stammered out.

"He's sure to be." And then, seeing that Perkins' stolid countenance did not relax a whit, she added apprehensively: "Why shouldn't he be?"

For answer, Perkins pointed to the newspaper. With a quick, questioning glance at him, she picked up the paper. Black headlines half a column wide glowered at her.

RUFUS McINTYRE MURDERED BY SECRETARY AFTER VIOLENT QUARREL.

"Impossible," burst from her lips. "Utterly false! An outrageous newspaper canard!"

"I'm sure I hope so," murmured Perkins.

She read farther, through the mass of headlines that gradually diminished in size to the story proper.

GUILTY MAN CAUGHT RED-HANDED BY PASSERS-BY. HAD BETRAYED MOMENTOUS SECRET.

At this point the paper dropped from her fingers, and her eyes stared vacantly before her. That last sentence was like the missing piece of a picture puzzle; with that at hand, all the mysterious incidents of the past twelve hours grouped themselves naturally to make a hideous spectacle of which her father was the central figure.

Perkins watched her carefully, alarmed at the sudden pallor that drove from her face what little vestige of color remained after her night's vigil. For once he dropped his distant, impersonal air of a well-trained servant. "I wouldn't worry too much, miss——" he began sympathetically.

His voice seemed to recall her to a sense of her surroundings.

"No, of course not," she interrupted him. "I suppose Mr. Webb is—arrested."

"If you will read——"

"I must talk with him at once, Perkins. Get him on the telephone. You can find where in the paper here, probably."

"I very much doubt if they will permit him to talk with any one," muttered Perkins.

"Then get the man in charge—the sheriff, or whoever it is, and connect him upstairs. Have some coffee sent up at once, and have the car around in half an hour."

"Certainly." Perkins stood aside for her to pass out.

She caught at the balustrade to overcome her dizziness as she mounted the stairs. Hardly had she entered her own room when the telephone rang. Eagerly she sprang forward, and lifted the receiver from the hook.

"Hello!" she said softly, hoping against hope that it was Webb himself at the instrument, and not his jailer.

"Muriel, is this you?" It was neither Webb nor the jailer. Fate was kinder to her than she dared hope.

"Papa," she cried joyously.

"Sh-h, listen," came back the reply. "That note I wrote—disregard it—

written under stress." Mr. French was laboring under some violent emotion. His words came jerkily; his voice was thin and strained.

"Papa, where are you? What note? When shall I expect you?" she cried, in a breath.

"I can't——" And then there was a sudden interruption, sounds of sharp physical struggle, strange, savage words, and the click in the instrument that told of connection being cut off.

Muriel hammered at the switch with all her strength. Finally central answered. "Central, give me that number again," she cried. "You cut us off."

Interminable buzzing and clicking. "They don't answer," central finally informed her.

"Who is it? What number is it?" Muriel demanded.

"Broad one-two-three-four-five. Information'll tell you who it is."

Muriel made a hasty note of the number, intending to call information without delay. But at that instant there came a discreet rap at the door, and, in answer to her summons, a maid entered with the breakfast tray.

"A letter just came for you by messenger," the maid informed her, as she set the tray upon the table.

"That's the note papa meant," exclaimed Muriel, half to herself. "Let me have it, quick, Martha!" she commanded.

And the maid, choosing the letter from two or three others that lay upon the tray, handed it to Muriel.

CHAPTER V.

AN UNEXPECTED CALLER.

"James Webb to the bar."

There was an instant hush throughout the dark, noisome courtroom, crammed to overflowing with sensation seekers as a result of the news item in the paper. The judge did not look up; his eyes were running over the police record of the case.

A grotesque figure in his dress suit, by contrast with the night's grist of drunks and vagrants and suspects who occupied the prisoner's pen with him, Webb stepped forward.

"James Webb, you are charged with the murder of——" came in a droning voice, to be interrupted almost instantly.

A dapper, alert little man, immaculate in the thinnest of serges, whose round face beamed cheerfully, and whose every gesture bespoke poise and self-confidence, arose by the counsel table.

"Your honor, I have to request that this man be dismissed from custody without the formality and the disgrace of the usual hearing. The district attorney is in possession of evidence to the effect that it was physically impossible for Mr. Webb to have murdered Mr. McIntyre."

The judge's shaggy gray eyebrows arched at the interruption. "Rather an extraordinary request, Mr. Palmer," he said, in measured tones, "seeing that he was apprehended practically flagrante delicto by reputable witnesses, according to the statement of the police."

"Practically, perhaps, but not positively," was Palmer's reply. "The complaint charges that Mr. Webb was discovered by the witnesses standing over the dead man, with the death-dealing instrument, namely, a revolver, in his hand; that immediately previous to that a revolver shot was heard; that, upon entering the office of the dead man, they overpowered Mr. Webb without difficulty and immediately summoned the police. That evidence is entirely false. The call for police assistance was sent in at nine-eighteen exactly. The watch in the breast pocket of the dead man, which was nicked by the bullet and stopped by it, shows conclusively that the murder was done at eight-twenty-six. That discrepancy alone should

prove Mr. Webb's innocence." Palmer paused impressively.

"Perhaps you have evidence that the watch carried by the dead man was going at the time of the murder, and was exactly synchronous with the timepiece in the police station," suggested the judge sarcastically, slightly upset by this extraordinary procedure.

Unperturbed by this refutation, Palmer continued: "Furthermore, your honor, the shot could not have been fired in the office in which the body of the dead man was found, unless the body was moved, afterward, to the position in which the witnesses and the police found it. Incidentally, the lieutenant who made the arrest is willing to testify that there was no smell of powder in the office when he arrived. But more conclusively, the body was found close against the window which gave out upon the court. If Mr. Webb fired the fatal shot as alleged by the witnesses, he must have done it from a distance of not more than a foot from the body of the man, in which case the murdered man's clothing must have been scorched and burned by powder. And there is not a trace of it to be found. Neither could Mr. Webb have fired the shot from another quarter, nor could the murdered man have been in any other position when the shot was fired, for by the testimony of the witnesses almost no time elapsed between the firing of the shot and their apprehension of the prisoner."

"This may all be very true, Mr. Palmer," said the judge, in awe-inspiring tones, "but it is most irregular procedure. The man must plead first; this is no time to present testimony."

Palmer's eyes shifted anxiously toward the entrance to the courtroom. Still he seemed utterly unruffled by the judge's reprimand. "And finally, and most conclusively, your honor," he went on, "the office of the district attorney is too burdened with important cases to conduct one in which the defense is impregnable, and the prosecution impossible for want of witnesses."

"Exactly what do you mean by that statement, Mr. Palmer?" demanded the judge, his surprise overcoming for the moment his love of exact procedure.

Palmer's eyes again sought the door. "Just this, your honor, that the three witnesses to the murder have not appeared here this morning, that they have left the addresses they gave at the police station, and that the police can find no trace of them."

"Most mysterious," murmured the judge.

"Exactly, your honor," replied Palmer blithely, still keeping an eye on the door. "The People can make out no case at all, under the circumstances."

Suddenly the door at the back of the courtroom opened, and a man entered hurriedly. "And, unless I am very much mistaken," Palmer continued, "we have here the verdict of the coroner's jury, recommending the release of Mr. Webb, on exactly the evidence I have presented to you."

Palmer took the envelope from the messenger, and laid it with a flourish before the judge. "I am sorry to have resorted to such uncustomary procedure to delay Mr. Webb's hearing until the coroner's jury could find their verdict," Palmer apologized, with a smile, "but it seemed to me unfair to submit a man so palpably innocent to the disgrace of arraignment."

With an absent-minded grunt, the judge perused the papers laid before him. "Seems to be in order," he said at last. "Prisoner is discharged."

"It's like this, Jim," began Palmer five minutes later, as he slammed the taxi door and the machine started uptown for Webb's apartment. "I've risked my reputation to get you off with the least possible annoyance. This murder is a big thing, bigger, probably, than I can imagine, because I'm not in the

know of Stock Exchange things. If you could help me solve it, it would be one grand boost for me."

"Surest thing you know, Sam," promised Webb. "I'll help you all I can. I must confess, though, that I'm as much in the dark just now as you are, and I don't want to say anything till I've had a chance to look things up. If that stupid cop had only taken my advice and grabbed those three men who tried to put up a plant on me, we'd be a whole lot nearer a solution than we are now."

"That's all spilt milk," said Palmer. "The motive's the thing. Find a motive and you've found your man. You knew McIntyre better than any one else did. You ought to know pretty well who wanted to get him out of the way."

Webb made no immediate reply. Palmer's statement brought up fresh in his mind the questions that he had asked himself a hundred times since his arrest, and always without definite answer. Could it be that Eddie Turner had betrayed the secret of the projected coup to the ring it would hit the hardest, and that a professional gunman had been called in as the surest means of forestalling McIntyre's victory over them? Was the Vanastor ring ruthless enough to resort to such tactics? Or was it private vengeance? After all, was McIntyre the chief victim of the plot? The conspiracy against himself had been as carefully worked out, as far as he could see, as that against McIntyre; sufficient foundation for a theory that he himself was the object of the attack.

Palmer grew impatient. "Well, Jim, what about it?" he inquired at last.

"I hardly agree with you," replied Webb. "It seems to me that the surest way of finding out who fired the shot is by learning where the shot came from. You looked into that matter. What did you think about it?"

"I should say it came either from the window of the janitor's closet just across the way, or else from a window in the offices of Raub & Schoenfeld, who call themselves brokers."

"The janitor's place seems to be your one best bet. Raub & Schoenfeld are outside brokers. I don't know much about them, but they do a pretty big business, and offhand I should say they're above suspicion. Did you find any one who heard the shot?"

"No one. But that proves nothing. The coroner decided it was a small rifle that did the work, and not a revolver. The gun you found was a mere blind, of course. Therefore a Maxim silencer was probably used."

"And it was probably one of those three," said Webb. "You say the police can't find them?"

"Not a trace. The guy that had the real-estate office in your building has cleared out, and the renting agent can't tell us anything about him. He's had the office only about a month, which might or might not prove that this thing has been hatching for some time. Well, here you are, Jim. Let me hear from you as soon as you can. I'm depending on you, remember."

And for the second time, as he took leave of Palmer, Webb promised to do all in his power to solve the mystery. Then the taxi pulled away, and Webb mounted to his apartment alone.

In spite of the ordeal of the past twelve hours, Webb now evinced extraordinary activity. In the first place, Eddie Turner must be warned not to play the eighteen hundred on M., K. & T., if he had not already done so; for there was nothing to be gained from it. He called up Turner's office, and inquired for him.

"Mr. Turner hasn't been in for nearly a week," came the reply.

This, after all, thought Webb, was only natural under the circumstances. He tried to get Turner at his lodgings, and was informed that the young man

had not been seen for at least a couple of days. Still, Webb thought nothing strange of this, considering Turner's well-known habits. As a last resort, he called up Spedding & Co., Turner's brokers.

"No one here of that name," he was informed.

"One of your customers, I mean," Webb explained.

"I understand," the girl at the switchboard replied. "But we have no accounts in the name of Turner."

"You must be mistaken," Webb objected. "I know for a fact——"

"Excuse me," the girl interrupted, "but I am positive. That is part of my business, to know every one of our customers. We haven't carried an account in the name of Turner in at least three years, and that was a Mr. James B. Turner, an out-of-town customer. I have never heard of Edward Turner."

Still dominated by incredulity, Webb was on the point of interposing strenuous objection, but no one knew better than he the absolute infallibility of the switchboard girls in brokers' offices, and he was forced to accept her word as final.

This being so, what possible motive could have actuated Turner to lie about the names of his brokers—not alone his brokers in the past, to whom he had paid his peculations from the company, but to brokers through whom he intended—promised—to go short on M., K. & T. It made the gravest difference to Webb whether Turner dealt through Spedding & Co., or through some other office; yet for no reason whatever, so far as Webb could see, Turner had deliberately deceived him. And here, he began to think, was his best clew to the murder. If only he could ascertain through whom Turner had sold, he might find at least a motive for McIntyre's undoing.

This opened up another line of query. He telephoned his bank, thinking that the indorsement on the check would show through whom Turner dealt. After a long wait, he was informed that the check had not been presented, either for certification or payment. "But in the ordinary course of events," the bank clerk went on, "the check would not have come through the clearing house yet."

"I understand that," Webb returned. "But the check was to have been used as margin on a 'Change speculation, and would hardly have been accepted by brokers without certification, as the payee has no credit. Say, do me a favor, and stop the check when it comes through."

"All right, Mr. Webb."

Webb rang off. This nonpresentation of the check, either for cash payment or for certification, was totally inexplicable except in one way. Again he opened the telephone book to find the number which would corroborate his last theory; but, before he had made the call, the telephone rang sharply.

"Miss Muriel French to see you," the hallboy informed him.

"Right. I'll be down at once," Webb returned wonderingly.

"She says she wants to see you privately. She's coming up if she may," protested the hallboy.

"Of course. Why not?" Webb's amazement growing every second, he hung up the receiver, and waited for the bell to ring.

CHAPTER VI.

THE LETTER.

Although he had pictured to himself all sorts of imaginable errands that could have brought Miss French to see him, Webb was utterly unprepared for the real errand that she had come upon; and no less for her mental distraction which now bordered on hysteria. He knew, of course, that she had read of his own ordeal, and, in consequence, had

conjured up some jocular, if inane, speech to make light of the incident. But the words froze on his lips as he opened the door to her. For a moment he was staggered by the face that met him—deathlike pallor, accentuated by deep, dark shadows beneath the eyes, in which lurked unmistakable signs of the acutest suffering. Her usually lithe and erect figure seemed depressed and crushed as by some great invisible weight, so that Webb was instinctively actuated to reach out an arm to support her.

However, she waved him back, and sank wearily into a chair.

"What on earth has happened?" he asked in amazement.

"Oh, this horrible, horrible affair! What is the truth of it?"

"A little overzeal on the part of the police," replied Webb, with a mirthless smile. "Too bad it got into the papers this morning, but the evening papers will have a full account. The coroner's jury cleared me all right." Relieved, now, and feeling a certain flush of pleasure, because he felt that her trouble and her solicitude had been for him, Webb reached for a cigarette.

"I know that. They were mad to have suspected you at all," she cried vehemently. "No one in his right mind could have. But where is papa? What is his part in it? What's the meaning of this whole hideous nightmare? Oh, Jim, I shall go mad—stark raving—if I can't find out something about him." In her agitation she sprang from her chair and began to pace the length and breadth of the room.

Webb stopped short in the act of asking her permission to smoke. For an instant he regarded her with astonishment; then threw his cigarette upon the table and intercepted her.

"Muriel," he said sternly, "I don't understand at all what you are talking about. What has your father got to do with it? Sit down here and tell me about it." Almost by main force he led her to a chair; and she, dominated by him, became calmer.

"Of course, you couldn't have known," she admitted, after a moment of silence. "But papa certainly is mixed up in this affair—more, I'm afraid, than I dare think. Oh, Jim, you must help me."

"I most assuredly can't until I know what's troubling you. Begin at the beginning, and tell me everything."

And then, by dint of much patient and adroit questioning, Webb elicited from her the story of French's part in the matter, concealing his emotion as his mind seized upon the chief points: that French had broken with Turner presumably after Turner was in possession of the momentous secret; that French was actuated by some ulterior motive in arranging the dinner party at the café Monico; that French had left the restaurant most hurriedly after he himself had done so, giving reasonable foundation to the assumption that French had followed Webb downtown. Thus far, Webb calculated grimly, French's action had been suspicious in the extreme.

"Are you quite convinced," asked Webb, as she was relating the incident of the interrupted telephone call, "that he was forcibly interrupted?"

"Positive. I got the number from central right away, but——"

"Good! That was wise," Webb put in. "Who was it?"

"But before I could find out who it was," Muriel continued, "Martha came in with the note, and disconcerted me for a moment."

"What was the note?"

Half unwillingly, she fumbled in her purse. "Please remember that he said I was to disregard the letter, Jim, so he's not so bad as he might seem," she said, as she handed him the folded paper.

Webb ran his eyes swiftly over it.

Keenly as she scrutinized him, she saw no change in his expression that betrayed his emotion.

DEAR MURIEL: You must get word to Jim Webb that if he does not bear the brunt of the murder of McIntyre, I must. This is final and most positive. Tell him that witnesses will be at hand to make out that he was intoxicated at the time, and that he will get off with a very light sentence if he pleads this in extenuation. LEONARD FRENCH.

"Are you sure your father wrote this? It seems rather—impersonal."

"Sure as can be. I know his handwriting as I do my own. But you must remember, Jim, that he recanted later," she said anxiously.

"I don't forget that," returned Webb, with a laugh. "And I most certainly shan't hold it up against him."

"Do you think, Jim—is it possible that he was behind the—the murder?"

"Probably not. I wouldn't—or couldn't say just now. But go on with your story."

"Oh, yes. While I read the letter, I asked Martha to find out through information where the telephone was."

"And whose was it?"

"Raub, Schoenfeld & Co., papa's brokers."

"Impossible!" gasped Webb. "Your father's brokers?"

"I'm positive of it. Why?"

"Nothing. Go on. It came as a bit of a surprise," he explained, to still her curiosity.

"Then, on Martha's advice, I telephoned the police. They sent a man there at once—it was about half past seven in the morning—and there was no one there. And what is more peculiar, they found out later that a scrubwoman was in that suite at half past seven, and she swears she saw no one in the office, though she did hear the telephone ring.

"I had the car brought about at once, and went down to the police headquarters, or whatever you call the place. They kept me there a long time, answering all sorts of questions—things I don't half remember, though they made me tell them exactly everything I've told you. It was a terrible ordeal, for I felt, somehow, they suspected papa.

"Then, about ten or a little later, an officer went with me to the brokers' offices. We saw Mr. Raub himself. He was very nice, but simply pooh-poohed the idea that papa could have been there at seven in the morning. And the policeman who was with me finally decided that central had made a mistake in the number, and that it was not Broad one-two-three-four-five from which he had telephoned to me. Mr. Raub said that was the only possible explanation so far as he could see, and we left the office. Then I heard you had been cleared, and I came straight here. Surely, Jim, you must know something about it that will relieve my terrible anxiety."

Webb arose abruptly from his chair, crossed to the window that gave out upon the Drive, and stood silent for some time in his characteristic pose—his hands clasped behind his back, his feet spread slightly apart. Muriel French gazed at him anxiously, although he was unaware of it, for his eyes had the vacant expression of looking without seeing.

"Do you know anything about the business relations between your father and Eddie Turner?" he asked at last. "Have you any inkling of the object of Eddie's visit this morning—more precisely, what he wanted of your father?"

"I couldn't even guess. In fact, I never knew they had business relations. I always thought they were merely personal—or social friends."

"And possibly you were right," admitted Jim. "Now, look here, Muriel, I want a promise from you that you'll go from here straight to your doctor's, tell him everything, and put yourself in his care. You're all upset, and in a bad

state of nerves over nothing. I'd go with you, but"—here he made a grotesque gesture which included his evening clothes—"but it would hardly do at this time of day. I'll get after this matter right away, and you may rely upon it that it will be thrashed out before many hours are gone. And now—good-by. I shall call up the doctor in fifteen minutes, and if I find out you haven't been there, I'll do something perfectly awful. I'm a most terrifying ogre when I get started."

She laughed a little at his whimsicality, and paused at the door to give him her hand. "You know what's best, of course, but I don't believe all the doctors in New York could help me as much as favorable news from you. Don't hesitate to telephone me—no matter what you discover—even if you find he is—even the worst, Jim," she begged him, her voice faint with misgiving.

He caught her hand in the two of his, and pressed it impulsively. "I'm confident," he said, "that it will be good news."

She scrutinized him sharply for a possible double meaning to his words, but his eyes met hers, unwavering. Perforce satisfied with this rather enigmatic promise, she took leave of him.

When the elevator gates had clanged behind her, Webb closed the door, and sank wearily into a chair, his mind overwhelmed by the chaotic ramifications that led hither and thither, and in the long run nowhere.

TO BE CONCLUDED.

The second and concluding part of this story will appear in the June month-end POPULAR, on sale two weeks hence, May 23rd.

THE MAN WHO BEAT MATTY

CHRISTY MATHEWSON plays ball better than he plays cards, but he prides himself upon being "some" checker player. It is his custom to visit Y. M. C. A.'s and fire-department houses, or other places where he is likely to find a game of checkers, in the cities he visits. In Cincinnati, one evening, he played several games in a fire house, defeating the best players easily. As he left, he was invited to call the following evening. It was explained that the firemen would like to have him meet the champion of their company, who had been away that night. So Matty showed up again, and was introduced to an elderly man with a fireman's cap and coat. The name was given as Mr. McCarthy. He beat Mathewson three straight, then began to tire, and let Matty get two draws. After the last one, he remarked:

"I knew the minute you made that switcher you'd get a draw."

The ball player asked him how he knew, referring to a paragraph in a standard work on checkers.

"I wrote that for the book," replied the old man.

"Then your name must be Hessler," said Matty, and the old man acknowledged the subterfuge.

Mathewson relished the joke hugely, and made the most of an acquaintance he was very glad to form.

The Stolen Knocker

By Wells Hastings

Author of "A Satchel of Silver," "The Two Bulldogs," Etc.

This mystic postscript—"Put no trust in proverbs"—becomes the clew to the solution of the mystery of the stolen door knocker. The investigator is that unique amateur detective, Neil Carlyle, who was introduced by Hastings in "The Two Bulldogs."

IT was a custom of Neil Carlyle's, when he felt that his wits were growing dull, and his physical forces lax, to go to a small local map he had and choose a town at random. The only rules he made were that the town should be a small one, that he should have no previous acquaintance with it, nor friends in it, and that it should not be more than two hours from the city. And there was seldom more than a few minutes between his choice of a resting place and his setting out upon his vacation.

The village he had chosen upon this occasion, he had found particularly satisfactory. He had come for three days and had stayed for eight. And now, strolling back to his room in the colonial inn—a place which had thriven in stagecoach days, and was now prosperously busy again with the coming of the automobile—he thought regretfully of his to-morrow's return to the city. But his vacation had done its work; he knew that he was in fine shape, and that, once back, he would plunge into his occupation with his accustomed sense of excitement and eager interest.

He had been with his dogs to the top of a high hill, which rose above the wooded country, and gave him a clear view of sweeping woodland and meadow, brown, and russet, and yellow-green in the winter sunlight, with patches of snow here and there, the sparkling waters of the Hudson in the middle distance, and hazy violet hills on his far horizon. It had been a long walk, and the early-winter twilight had already fallen, and the houses he passed began to show glowing windows as he came to the outskirts of the village.

Very much to his astonishment, one of the dogs, following closely at heel, growled suddenly. And it was a small growl, a little ominous canine whisper of warning, but it brought Carlyle instantly to a standstill. He looked down at the dog and saw him standing rigid, his front legs planted firmly wide apart, his massive head held alert, and the short hairs on the loose scruff of his neck and along his spine bristling in a ridge of anger. It occurred to Carlyle that only once before had he ever heard him growl. He was friendly and intelligent, as are most well-bred English bulldogs, and especially was he well-mannered. He passed scurrying cats with indifference, and ignored the curs which sometimes yapped at his heels, with a ponderous, unshaken dignity. He was, in short, a dog of few words, whose infrequent utterances demanded a serious consideration. Car-

lyle felt his own muscles growing tense with excitement, as he glanced cautiously about him.

The walk was bordered by a tall hedge of hemlock, which cut off his view of the place inside, but a few feet before him he saw the broad gap of the gateway, and, stepping silently upon the grass which bordered the gravel walk, he stole forward on tiptoe and peered up the little drive which led to the doorway of a rambling, white-painted house.

The doorway itself was in the shadow of a columned porch, and was painted some dark color. Nevertheless, Carlyle, straining his eyes, thought he made out some figure standing close against it. And presently his suspicion was confirmed in startling fashion; for a sudden circular patch of golden light appeared on the door's surface, hesitated a moment, jerked upward a foot or so, and was gone as suddenly as it came. Small as the light had been, its reflected radiance had shown him clearly enough the figure of a man whose left hand stole into that circle of brilliant light almost upon the instant that it disappeared. But for one thing Carlyle would have accepted the incident as a natural one; for the light had simply sought and found out a big, old-fashioned knocker, for which the hand seemed to reach. This might be only a neighbor using an electric torch in his search for the door knocker—but, although most of this man's figure was seen dimly in the reflected glow, that hand which stole toward the knocker was revealed in as sharp detail as things are seen in a flash of lightning, and its fingers grasped a chisel-shaped strip of metal which was already prying beneath the edge of the knocker, when hand, and knocker, and jimmy disappeared again in darkness.

Carlyle felt sure that he had stumbled upon a thief at work, and his first impulse was to dash up the little strip of road, to grapple with him, and to give the alarm. But second thought kept him standing where he was. After all, it might be a neighbor; the knock might sound at another moment; or, indeed, it might be the owner of the house, himself, making some repair or intent upon some business which Carlyle could not guess. And if this was a thief, he must be on the alert, and there was no chance that Carlyle could steal up the gravel road unheard. So he stood waiting and listening for a knock. Instead there came the ripping, splintering sound he had half expected, and, as Carlyle dashed toward the door at last, he saw the man's dark form flit between him and the side of the house. Before he could swerve to follow it, the door itself was flung open, and a woman stood silhouetted in the bright, oblong frame of the casing.

She stretched out an arm, pointing at him in wavering fashion. "Stand where you are," she said. "You—you had better put your hands up over your head." It was only then that he noticed in her pointing hand an absurd little nickel-plated revolver.

He put his hands obediently above his head. "I think you have made a mistake," he said, and then corrected himself with a laugh. "I am very sure you have. I was passing by, and I noticed a man on your porch who seemed to be trying to pry your door knocker off. I should have interrupted him, only I wasn't sure. He is probably well away by now, but if you like, I'll see what I can do about catching him."

The pointing revolver wavered in a larger circle. "Elsa," the woman called. "Elsa, come here, please."

There was a moment's pause, and then a little stout woman appeared beside the slim one in the doorway.

"Elsa, this young man really appears to be a gentleman, and he *says* he was just passing by. I don't wish to be cruel, and I am sure his arms must be

aching, holding them up that way. Would you mind going and looking at him closely?"

But the stout figure shrank back. "Oh, Dorrie," she protested, "I'd much rather not."

"Humph," said the slim one. "You point this revolver at him, and I'll go and look."

Elsa, however, put her hands firmly behind her back so decidedly that Carlyle found it hard to swallow his laughter.

"Suppose," he suggested, "that you stand where you are and keep me covered until you have had a better look at me. I'll come up on the steps into the light." And although Elsa shrieked and retreated before him, he stepped forward, still holding his hands above his head, until the light of the doorway shone full upon him.

"Why—why," said the woman, "I'm sure I beg your pardon. Please put your hands down this minute. It was very stupid of me, but we have been so much frightened of late—and—and you were standing in the middle of our walk, and——"

"I quite understand," Carlyle interrupted, dropping his arms with some relief, and smiling at her, "but do you mean that this sort of thing has happened before?"

"Not exactly, but so many queer things have happened."

Carlyle stood for a little, silently debating. He supposed he should say "Good evening," and go back to his supper; but he had lost interest in supper, and his curiosity was violently aroused. The very strangeness of the small crime he had been witness to allured him, and this little woman's hint of other happenings made him long to hear about them. He knew that he must not frighten her, and yet he determined to stay if she would let him.

"I wish," he said awkwardly, "that you would let me talk to you about this. I might be able to get back your knocker for you, or help you in some way. You see, this is rather in my way of business—finding things and giving people advice and all that."

"Do you mean that you are a detective?"

"Well, not exactly a detective," said Carlyle, noticing that the stouter woman had stolen back into the hallway, and was gazing at him with a kind of rapturous excitement, "I've no official standing, but I do investigate crime for money"—and, seeing her face fall, he added hastily—"and as often as not for the fun of the thing. Certainly, if there is anything I can do to help, I shall be very glad to offer my services."

It was evident by the little woman's expression that she wanted help very much, indeed. She put her hand to her mouth in undecided fashion, her color came and went and came again. "I am afraid I could not ask you to help us," she said, but even as she spoke the stout woman came forward and plucked her imploringly by the sleeve.

"Please, sister, don't be foolish. The young gentleman, I am sure, is very kind. Do ask him in. You see," she explained, turning to Carlyle, "Dorrie is so proud, she is in mortal fear of being beholden to any one."

At this the slim sister flushed more deeply, and then laughed and motioned Carlyle before her. "If I don't ask you in, I shall never hear the last of it," she said. "Elsa would never forgive me if I refused her her first opportunity to talk to a real detective."

"Certainly, Dorrie," the stout woman protested, "if ever anybody needed a detective, we do right now. It seems as if he must have been sent," she concluded vaguely.

In the brighter light of the old-fashioned sitting room, Carlyle saw that the sisters were middle-aged, and of that distinct spinster type found so often in small American villages. If he had

felt any awkwardness before, it disappeared now, for this was the type with which he was thoroughly familiar. The maiden aunt who had brought him up had once worn much the same expression. The slim sister whom he had heard called Dorrie was evidently the bolder and leading spirit of the two, and it was to her he turned after introductions had been made, and they were all seated comfortably about the table upon which the lamp stood.

"Now, Miss Winslow," he said, "I want you to feel that it will be a great pleasure to me to help you in any way I can. From what your sister said, and from something you said to me yourself, I infer that this present remarkable outrage is not the only thing that has happened to disturb you. You said that you had been troubled so much of late. Does that mean that there have been other robberies committed here, or were the troubles of a different kind—outside of my province?"

"I don't quite know how to answer that, Mr. Carlyle. We feel as if we had been robbed, and we are very sure that some one has entered the house more than once, but never before have we discovered anything to be missing."

"And yet you are positive that the house has been entered."

"We think it has. Once we found a window open that I am certain I had closed, and we have often thought we heard somebody moving about. Once Elsa was sure she saw a light; and we have imagined that pieces of furniture and bric-a-brac were moved from their places, but, even when I have gotten up my courage and come down in the night, I have never seen any one."

"And is that all?"

Miss Dorrie flushed and hesitated uncomfortably, and before she spoke the stout sister broke in.

"No, that isn't all, Mr. Carlyle. No, Dorrie, don't interrupt me. It isn't fair to tell only a part, and I don't care if you do think I am foolish. I know a detective should have all the facts, and then make his own deduction—all the stories say so. Mr. Carlyle, either this house is haunted, or somebody knows that we have never been able to find the money."

"The money?" Carlyle repeated rather blankly. He saw that Miss Dorrie was frowning at her sister, and he turned to her. "I think, Miss Winslow," he said, "that your sister is right. I can really help you better if you tell me everything that you even suspect might have a bearing on the case. You must remember," he added, as he saw the little lines of obstinacy gather about her mouth, "that I have to consider the things my clients tell me as a doctor or a lawyer receives a client's confidence, that professionally I am a machine with ears and eyes, but no mouth. You must do as you think best, but you can trust me—— I could not even give you good advice unless I knew all the facts."

Miss Winslow nodded and made her determination. "I know you are right," she said, at last, "only I'm not used to talking to strangers about private and family matters. But"—and she smiled pleasantly—"it is quite evident that you are a gentleman, and I suppose we do need advice. The money my sister spoke of is a sum we—expected—we—were led to believe—was in this house. I don't want to bother you with details——"

"Details," Carlyle protested, "are just what I must have. You must tell me everything from the beginning."

"Well, then—I hope you are quite comfortable in that chair, Mr. Carlyle—in the beginning, or as nearly in the beginning as we need to go, Elsa and I lived in a little town up in Connecticut, a town not much bigger than this. We—we didn't have much money; in fact, we had scarcely anything at all except

what we earned. I taught in the village school, and Elsa painted roses on china, but we shared two rooms and got along quite comfortably, cooking for ourselves, and everything. We had no relatives except an old uncle, Phineas Winslow—and he had never had anything to do with us. We used to send him letters sometimes, and little things that we had made at Christmas time, because we knew he lived all alone, and we were sorry for him. He never acknowledged either our letters or our little gifts, and, except that they were not returned to us, we should not even have known that he was alive."

Miss Dorrie paused, and searched in the workbasket beside her on the table, until she found a little key with which she unlocked the table drawer.

"You can imagine our surprise, then," she said, holding out a letter to Carlyle, "when, one morning, we found this in our mail."

Carlyle took the single sheet which she extended to him, and unfolded it. The writing was small and shaky, but perfectly legible. He read:

Miss Dorothy and Miss Elsa Winslow.

MY DEAR NIECES: You have been good girls. I am dying and I know it. You will find I have not forgotten you. Lawyer Hardwick has my will, but all lawyers are rascals like everybody else, so come down and ask to see it when you get this. I am leaving you my house and everything in it, which is all I have. You will find no money in any bank. Get over trusting people. Have no nonsense about my funeral, but you might see that I have a decent stone. You have been good girls and I hope you will be happy. Yours truly, PHINEAS WINSLOW.

At the bottom of the page, Carlyle read another single line, which was underscored:

Put no trust in proverbs.

He refolded the letter and laid it before him on the table. "Please go on," he said.

"When we got that letter," Miss Dorrie resumed, "we were dreadfully upset. We were sorry for poor old Uncle Phineas, and, I am ashamed to say, a little suspicious that he might be playing a kind of joke on us; for when he was younger, we often used to hear tales of a kind of cruel humor that he had. Life wasn't very easy for us, but we were getting along, and we had gotten used to things. It was hard to know what to do. In the end I got leave of absence, and came down here for a day. I found that Uncle Phineas really had died on the day we got the letter, and Mr. Hardwick showed me his will. It was quite a decision to make, but we gave up our rooms, and came here to live." Miss Dorrie gave a little sigh.

"Dorrie," said Elsa, "you aren't telling everything even now. I don't see anything to be ashamed of. You left your position because people here said that Uncle Phineas had money, and because we both expected to find it here in the house. We found out, Mr. Carlyle, that he had once lost some money in a bank, and that he had never had anything to do with banks after that. Dorrie will be shocked, I suppose, but I think you ought to know that Uncle Phineas had a reputation here of being a great miser. He had money to lend, and he charged well for it. Everybody said he was rich, and everybody thought he hid his money somewhere around the house. Whenever he could, he made people pay him in gold.

"We can't afford to live here in this house and do nothing, and Dorrie knows it; but we were sure that we should find money here, especially because so many people wanted to buy the place, and offered us more than just the land and the house is worth. We have been thinking lately of selling, because we have looked and looked and not been able to find anything, and because the noises in the night frighten us. But Dorrie is afraid that that would displease Uncle Phineas, and she

says it wouldn't be quite honest to sell it for what we know is more than its value, when we have found out almost certainly that there is no pot of gold or anything like that hidden anywhere about it. Of course, that's silly, but it's just like Dorrie."

Throughout her sister's interruption, the elder Miss Winslow sat in great embarrassment.

"I don't know what you'll think of us, Mr. Carlyle," she said now, "but what Elsa says is true. We have searched this house over very thoroughly, and the grounds, too. I have been ashamed at our eagerness, but"—in spite of her embarrassment, she looked Carlyle bravely in the eye—"but there is a sort of evil enchantment about money, I think, that made us lose our heads at first, and we went prying about the place like two excited, greedy children. We have been poor all our lives, and the possibility of becoming suddenly rich affected us absurdly; so that we forgot the dignity proper to ladies in a wild search for the money people told us they were sure poor Uncle Phineas must have left."

Carlyle smiled cheerfully. "I don't think you need worry about any loss of dignity, Miss Winslow," he said. "Out of a hundred people in your situation, just one hundred would have done as you have. The magic of gold isn't all wicked magic, money isn't meant to lie in some hidden store, but to be used by those to whom it belongs, for their own good and the good of the community. And from all you have told me I think your uncle has left you a sum of money. Your night visitations—which may or may not have been made by the same prowler who has just made off with your knocker—prove pretty clearly that some one believes there is a considerable sum hidden in this house. Whatever your uncle meant by that last enigmatical line, it is at least a hint, I suspect, that he has left you provided for. If you don't mind, I'll sleep on it overnight, and come back in the morning to make as scientific a search as I can of the premises. I don't see why anybody should have stolen such a thing as a door knocker, but I should like to find out who stole it, and *why* they stole it. I'll leave you one of my dogs for company and guard, and I can promise you that you will be troubled by no intruder."

In this way it was arranged. Carlyle called in his dogs from the doorstep, and introduced them properly, leaving the big brindle on guard, while he went back to his boarding place with the other.

He sat up late, puzzling over his problem. His good sense told him that the theft of the knocker was probably the freakish crime of some too ardent collector of antiques, but his instinct brought him back again and again to the belief that in some way the knocker must furnish a clew to the whereabouts of Phineas Winslow's accumulated fortune. Just how it could do this he was utterly unable to guess.

Nor did his search of the house next day advance him much. He found no definite clew that led him either directly to the thief or to that hoard of wealth which every romantic drop of blood in his veins assured him must exist.

With the sisters he searched the house from top to bottom, measuring walls in the hope of finding some hidden chamber, tapping upon wainscoting, going carefully over the floors, and even digging out bricks in the fireplaces wherever the mortar happened to be a little loose. But they found nothing; and Carlyle was forced to conclude, at last, that if the money was hidden anywhere, it was concealed in some article of furniture. There was a great deal of furniture in the house, a strange mixture of modern and antique. The attic was full of old chairs, and brasses, and tables thick with dust, and even the

cellar stored various household articles. But he nowhere found anything peculiar, except that where the dust in the attic was the usual brown-gray accumulation of years, the dust which coated everything in the cellar was strangely white, and seemed to be composed of minute particles of lime. A white pile of this substance, indeed, lay in one corner.

In spite of his ill success, he had no feeling of discouragement, but rather his very keen native curiosity was whetted to such a tormenting desire to know, that in the evening he gave up his room at the inn and moved his belongings to a spare bedroom in the old house.

"I am pretty certain," he told the sisters, "that some one in the village has a definite guess where your uncle's money is hidden. That is the only way I can see of explaining the noises which you have heard in the night. You are sure the house has been entered, and I think that it probably has been, but, with the exception of the knocker, nothing has been stolen; therefore we must conclude that your nocturnal visitor is risking arrest for burglary with the knowledge and hope of some reward for which he is willing to go the length of committing crime. Certainly, if the thief is coming here, he is a very discriminating one; the silver on the sideboard alone is well worth stealing, and he seems to have absolutely ignored it. We must hope that he will be foolish enough to come again in the next night or so."

It was not until the fourth night after this, however, that Carlyle was wakened by a low growl. He struck a match, and saw that both his dogs were standing rigidly by the door, their blunt noses sniffing at the crack beneath. He whispered to them to be quiet, and, stepping gingerly from bed, groped his way to his clothes and began silently dressing. Once the dogs growled again, and this time his own ear detected a small sound from the floor below, which seemed to him the scrape of metal upon stone.

He was feeling a great thankfulness as he dressed; for although he had searched unceasingly these four days, he had come no nearer his solution; and, although he had kept close to the house, he had begun to fear that the nocturnal visitor had heard of his presence there, and was watching until he left, before entering the house again. And he had about concluded that in this housebreaker lay his only hope of discovering the whereabouts of Phineas Winslow's bequest.

He had finished dressing, and his hand was already upon the doorknob, when he heard a creak upon the stair, and in another moment soft steps, passing his door, and then, a little later, the sound of footsteps above him. He opened the door a little, and peered out into the hallway. The dogs pressed close to his legs, and he pushed them back with a low word of admonition.

The hall was dark, but his eyes had grown accustomed to the darkness, so that, as he stared, various objects became dimly visible, and at the far end the oblong of a window showed faintly luminous with the soft gleam of the starlit night. He heard the footsteps descending again, and against the window saw the silhouetted form of a man stooping beneath the weight he seemed to carry under each arm. Even in the dim light something flickered and shone as he came cautiously down the hall and passed Carlyle's door.

Carlyle waited a moment, and then slipped out into the hall and stole down the stairway after him, counting the steps as he went, that he might avoid the treacherous squeak, which he remembered lay in the ninth one from the top. He was in his stocking feet, and even to his own strained hearing his descent was noiseless.

At the door of the sitting room, he paused again and listened. Some one

across the room was breathing heavily. Then the silence was broken by the startling crackle of a match, and the whole room was revealed brightly in its little flame. A man was kneeling beside the fireplace, bending intently over it, and cupping the match in his left hand.

He was an old man apparently, for an immense gray beard swept over his narrow chest, falling between his knees, as he squatted there, frog fashion, fumbling on the hearthstone. He was so absorbed in his work that he did not so much as turn his head until Carlyle had tiptoed across the room and laid a hand upon his shoulder. But at the touch he screamed aloud, dropping the match, and springing to his feet in the sudden darkness. Carlyle could feel the thin shoulder stiffen beneath his fingers, and at the same moment he was struck a blow that filled the darkness with showers of dancing sparks. He staggered and threw out his other hand, gripping the long beard.

Another blow fell instantly upon his unprotected head, and a third he caught upon his forearm, as he loosed his grip upon the man's shoulder and instinctively raised his arm for protection. Still another blow fell, jarring him from wrist to elbow, and he struck angrily into the darkness, striking with his free hand a foot or so above that one which still gripped strands of the flowing gray beard. The blow landed solidly, and he felt the head snap back before it, and heard a thud and a crash as his man went backward against the fireplace, and fell to the hearth, bringing its implements clanging against the fender.

Even as he had struck, but too late to withhold the blow, his sudden anger had changed to as sudden shame. He had known from the brief moment that he had gripped the man that he was slight and spare, and his glimpse of him had shown him old—a gray-bearded, stooping fellow. He himself was sick and dizzy from the blows which had fallen on his head, but now he felt a new sickness and a new dizziness. There had been no sound after that crashing fall; he wondered if he had done murder; if he had struck that gray-bearded—— Carlyle fairly shook in the wave of nausea that went over him, realizing suddenly that his left hand still clutched that beard. He opened his fingers and shook it from him in a kind of terror.

But as he felt for the edge of the mantel, a soft light spread across the room, a light which flamed abruptly into brilliance, and, turning, he saw the Misses Winslow standing in the doorway. Both of them were buttoned from the chin to toe in long, woolly gray wrappers, and each carried a lamp. Carlyle stepped uncertainly forward toward them. The stout sister shrieked and began trembling in a manner that threatened the lamp she held.

"Be quiet this moment, Elsa," said Miss Dorrie sharply. She herself was very pale, and was trembling, but the custom of authority evidently steadied her. "Are you much hurt, Mr. Carlyle?" she asked. "You are quite—well—quite bloody."

"No, I don't think I am much hurt, but this fellow hit me over the head with an iron bar or something—and I struck him. Perhaps you had better put down your lamps and give me a chance to look at him before you come any nearer. He struck his head on the fireplace, I think, and I am afraid I may have injured him."

He turned without waiting to see that his suggestion was obeyed, and bent over the huddled figure on the hearthstone. With a great breath of relief, he saw that the man's eyes were open and watching him.

He was a dark, thin fellow, Carlyle saw, and he might have been anywhere between forty and sixty. The sullen, shifting eyes did not seem old, but his

face was lined with a myriad of little wrinkles, and his mean, thin-lipped mouth moved and puckered like that of an old man. His clean-shaven chin showed the growing discoloration of a bruise. Across his legs the gray beard lay limply, except where it was stiffened by the wires with which it had been attached.

"Are you much hurt?" Carlyle asked, but he got no answer. He turned then and beckoned Miss Dorrie to him.

"Perhaps you may know who that is."

"Good gracious" said Miss Dorrie, in a very small voice. "Good gracious, what has happened? Why, it's Lawyer Hardwick. How did he get here?"

The man on the hearthstone raised himself to a sitting position, passed a hand across his forehead, and opened his small eyes in startled fashion.

"Eh!" he said. "Eh? Where am I? Why, Miss Winslow, what are you doing in my house, and who, may I ask, is this young man?"

"You're not in your own house," said Carlyle.

"How's that? How's that? Not in my house." He struggled to get to his feet, but Carlyle pushed him gently back.

"No, you had better stay where you are. You can talk just as well sitting down."

The lawyer wrung his hands. "My unfortunate habit has at last betrayed me." He turned appealingly to Miss Dorrie. "I beg, Miss Winslow, that this matter may go no further. It would hurt me, I am sure, professionally. Since boyhood I have always walked in my sleep, but never, certainly, has my somnambulism led me into such an atrocious situation. Never to my knowledge have I wandered from my own house, or found myself in the house of another." He smiled apologetically. "I deplore this deeply. I must have frightened you good ladies very much, and this young man here seems to have taken me for a housebreaker —but, naturally enough, naturally enough." He raised his hand ruefully to his chin, and then tenderly felt the back of his head. "I seem to have met with an accident. Yes, you did take me for a burglar, didn't you?"

"We are very sorry, Mr. Hardwick, and you may be sure we shall say nothing about it," Miss Winslow began reassuringly; but Carlyle interrupted her.

"May I ask," he said, "if you always wear a false beard on your unfortunate nocturnal wanderings, or if you can always be counted upon to defend yourself so ably? It was the poker you hit me with, I think." He turned his eyes from Hardwick to the fireplace, and stooped to pick up the lawyer's weapon.

It was a heavy poker of old-fashioned type, brass its whole length, except for its tip of iron. It was bent almost double. Carlyle looked at it curiously, wondering why a blow from such an instrument had not killed him, and absently straightening it in his hands.

Then, suddenly and boyishly, he whooped aloud, and danced in most undignified fashion about the startled sisters.

"Don't mind me," he cried, pulling himself together at the sight of the shocked amazement in the faces, "but look and tell me what you see in the fireplace. This man Hardwick is one of the cleverest sleepwalkers in the world."

The eyes of the sisters followed his pointing finger, but they said nothing.

"Tell me what you see," he cried impatiently.

"Why, nothing," Miss Elsa faltered, "unless you mean the andirons."

"Exactly; the andirons. That's it. But please tell me how many of them you see."

"Sakes alive," said Miss Elsa, "there are four of them."

Carlyle stepped across the room and jerked down the long silk-covered cord of a tasseled, old-fashioned bell pull. "I'll tell you about it," he said, "while I am tying up this somnambulist—who, by the way, seems to have been a much brighter man than I am; for he guessed what that white dust in the cellar was, and he saw that for every piece of brass in the house there was a duplicate in the attic. Your uncle seems to have worked to its last perfection the idea that the best place to hide a thing is in plain sight. He made plaster casts of every bit of brass in the house—and there seems to have been a great deal of it—and then he made andirons and fenders, and pokers, and trays, and knobs on beds, and handles on bureau drawers, and many other things out of much more precious metal, storing the originals in the attic, and putting his transformed money around where he could look at it all the time. Midas had the idea, you know, but he never learned to control it. Your uncle probably did his casting in the cellar, certainly he broke up his plaster forms there."

Carlyle turned the lawyer over on his face, and began tying knots along his back. "I have a great respect for Lawyer Hardwick," he said. "That beard, now, is so much better than a mask, and he was a genius to guess the whereabouts of your uncle's fortune. Also, you must admit that he was clever to replace the things he took from the downstairs rooms with their brass originals from the attic. Stealing the knocker was an act of violence, and undoubtedly a mistake, but Homer was known to nod, and I suppose that knocker was worth at least five hundred dollars. Why, he must have banged me over the head with four hundred dollars."

"As soon as it is daylight we will go up to this gentleman's house with a bottle of acid and locate the rest of your property. Why, what is the matter, Miss Winslow?"

"I was wondering," Miss Dorrie faltered, "if we'll have to send him to jail, and prosecute, and all that—as good citizens, I mean. It would make me most unhappy."

"Personally," said Carlyle, "I should send him up; but, on the other hand, he isn't worth losing any peace of mind over, and if you want to, you really can believe that he is a somnambulist. That's the right view, isn't it, Miss Elsa?"

But Miss Elsa was sitting with her plump hands clasped in her lap, her brow puckered with a great mental struggle. "I was wondering," she murmured absently, "what he meant by paying no attention to proverbs—what proverb he meant to have us disregard." Her blue eyes opened wide with inspiration, and a look of absolute happiness brought a sudden light to her rather heavy features. "I have it," she cried. "Of course, that must be it: 'All that glitters is not gold.'"

"Quite so," Carlyle agreed, rather absent in his turn, for his mind had turned whimsically to the bill he should present.

THE MISSES WINSLOW TO NEIL CARLYLE.
Debtor: To Professional Services rendered —One Ash Tray.

A PHYSICAL HANDICAP

JOSEPH M. FLANNERY, the radium manufacturer, has a concise way of calling a man a jackass in euphemistic terms.

This is how he does it:

"That fellow's ears stick out so straight from his head that he couldn't wear a pencil behind his ear without using a string."

De Profundis

By Berton Braley

LORD, but I'm flabby, and pussy, and fat.
(Notice my waistcoat's protuberance!)
Hanging around like an overfed cat
Robs me of vim and exuberance;
Once I was praying for calm in my life,
Now I have calm till I'm sick of it,
Joy's only found in achievement and strife,
——Put me again in the thick of it!

Comfort and leisure were all I desired,
Peace seemed a fortune delectable.
Ah! How I longed to be rich and retired,
Planned to be highly respectable.
Now I have learned there's no pleasure in ease,
None in the riches we venerate;
Better the tang of the wide salty seas,
Better the trails unregenerate!

I must go forth from the fleshpots again,
(Faith but the smell of them's savory!)
Lest I forget how to battle with men,
Lest I grow fond of my slavery,
Fond of my bondage to gear and to gold,
Fearful of fate and each trick of it,
I must go back ere my courage grows cold,
Back to the fight—and the thick of it!

The Man Who Disappeared

By Richard Washburn Child

Author of "The Blue Wall," "Jim Hands," Etc.

This is the third story in the moving-picture series, continuing the adventures of John Perriton, who to save the brother of the girl he loved takes upon his own shoulders the guilt of another and becomes a fugitive seeking to hide himself in the underworld under the assumed name of John Pottle.

III.—THE COME-ON

JOHN PERRITON had assumed an alias. It is not often that a series of events takes a young clubman and well-known figure of the fashionable, luxurious, and idle class known as society, and turns him over to the mercies of a capricious Goddess of Fortune, so that she may cut every tie which bound him to his former life and cast him friendless, penniless, and hunted as a murderer, into the gutter to live, and hide in a world of squalor and associate with the human dregs of a great city.

Up to the moment he had fled, after taking the blame of a crime, so that the girl he loved should be shielded from the knowledge of her own brother's guilt, Perriton's world had been the world of the club, the polo ground, the exclusive summer colony, the well-dressed and well-gowned functions and entertainments of the affluent. To him every phase of this new world—this underworld—of which he had become a denizen was unfamiliar. Into it he had escaped, through it he had reached a hiding place and even a residence in Meeker Joe's hop joint, and in the midst of it he had found that in it men and women lived by their evil wits, and that the price of life, of daily food, of mere existence was crime, or the commission of misdemeanors, and the price of liberty was an external vigilance against detection and capture. He had fled like an animal; among hunted animals he must take up his abode.

The first night he had followed the direction given an escaped convict which had fallen into his hands—the night when he had climbed over fire escapes and roofs to reach the secret entrance of Meeker Joe's, he had written a new name on the bare, scarred plaster wall of the little anteroom where he, as other new visitors, were watched through peek holes, while each believed that he was unobserved. The name he had written was John Pottle.

He had written it with some solemn thought. A new name—a new man, a new personality, a new life! Would this new life mean the building up of a stronger, better John than the old, idle, self-indulgent, dissipated John Perriton? Would the new John Pottle

This series began in the first May POPULAR.

be capable of climbing out of an environment of life's lowest depths, or would the underworld, little by little, make him its own?

For a week, in the room where the victims of the "habit" came, where the smoke of cooking opium pills steamed up and flattened against the iron-barred and painted translucent panes of the skylight by day, or curled about the greasy, dirty, swinging kerosene lamp by night, John had let the hours slide away while the nightmare of misery and loathsome humanity had crept in and out, speaking in hoarse whispers and laughing softly in delirium.

He had been forced to sniff the sickish odor of the drug until he felt that never again would he be able to rid his nostrils of its caressing, menacing aroma. In the square room, warmed by a little round-bellied, red-glowing stove, he had, like the others, been forced at times to share with some stranger and nameless creature one of the cheap, rattle-springed cots which lined the wall like beds in a hospital of the infernal regions. More than half of this time a terrible, hairy old man, who might have stepped out of an Albrecht Dürer etching, had leaned over the back of a kitchen chair, suffering the agonies of convulsive asthma, and watching John with the dull eyes of an ancient tortoise, periodically and punctually as a clock offering him a drink from a bottle of whisky, until the persistence of it, combined with John's old craving for alcohol, coming out of the half-real, half-dream atmosphere of the place, nearly broke through all the resolves and convictions with which the fugitive from the law had begun his new career.

For days, under the dim light, he had lost track of sunlight, stars, and the turning about of the globe on its own axis, and at times the universe had seemed to narrow down to the mewing of a lean black cat with yellow eyes, which stretched its bare bones and loose skin, and yawned each time some victim of the place arose to go.

The cat was the other side of the soul of Siam Charlie. Siam, a coolie born in the islands of the China Sea, was lean and yellow, and his eyes were black as a crow's bill; the cat was lean and black, and its eyes were as yellow as the taut skin on Siam's cheek bones. Siam was Meeker Joe's manager, and his word was law in the "Studio," as they called it, but the cat was something more; John used to wonder at times if the cat was not the incarnation of the evil goddess to whom all the slinking shadows of men and women, in this temple, made their devotions.

John knew when Siam, trotting noiselessly across the floor with slippered feet and with a tally frame in his hand, came to put out the kerosene lamp and to inspect the faces of the "dead," as they were called, on the cots, that Wednesday had come. He had not dared to show his face to the day for fear that he would be recognized. The food which had been brought in to him, and the harbor of refuge where his presence had been tolerated, had asked no payment from him.

Little by little in his mind there had grown up the notion that Meeker Joe and Siam Charlie were not granting him their hospitality from good-heartedness. He felt reasonably sure that they and their fraternity intended that some day he should be made to pay and pay well. Whether or not they recognized him, he was in their power, knew it, and wondered what he should do if they were to demand of him assistance in the commission of some new crime.

He found himself watching Siam as the sphinxlike Oriental went about with the lank black cat at his bare yellow heels, covering the sleepers with his bony skeleton fingers; he found himself wondering whether he dared

to ask Siam for a newspaper so that he might learn what they would know about the crime for which it, regardless of his innocence, would hold him responsible.

The sunlight had fallen squarely on the painted translucent skylight before all but one of the ghostlike whispering creatures of the night had been let out, one by one, by the Chinaman to slink down the long stairs into the street. One man alone was left.

This man, now heavy with the drug, and incapacitated, was known as "Biceps." John had understood that years ago he had developed wonderful muscles of his upper arms in a Y. M. C. A. gymnasium, and that his pride in an exhibition of their strength had given him the sobriquet. Now he had the reputation, when he was not under the disability of alcohol or drugs, of being ready for any form of money-making crime. John had heard him called a "utility man"—an ominous, suggestive phrase, as ominous and suggestive as his square, blue-black jaws and his eyes, which, being set too close together in his head, above his round nose, gave him the look of a vicious pig.

As the last of the visitors of the night took his leave Biceps woke, called to Siam, and said: "Get me another pill. I'm going all the way. Ain't the woods thick and greasy? And Charlie —get me a newspaper, see? And don't touch me until after dark, or I'll kill you with my two hands."

John heard the request for a newspaper with delight. He had been spared the need to beg from Siam or to appear so curious about the current news as to excite suspicion that he had part in it. Besides, when the Oriental, muttering to himself in his own tongue, had gone, he had the first opportunity which had come to him to inspect himself in the old mirror.

This looking-glass hung behind the counter where in a locked, brass-bound chest the opium paste was kept, and where the buyers of the drug stood when their "trick" was weighed out to them on the backs of playing cards —those same cards whose glazed backs, scraped dry, now strewed the floor. John stared at himself in the mirror. He was shocked by his pallor, by the growth of beard upon his face, by his hollow eyes and matted hair.

"They would never know me," said he, half afraid and half triumphant, because of his evil appearance. "And perhaps we can improve the disguise a little more."

A pair of scissors, used by Siam Charlie for cutting off slips of red paper for time cards, was on the counter. John trimmed the hair from the side of his head and plastered the remainder close to his skull. From the sepia ink pot he took the brush, blackened his eyebrows and the hair about his lips, and with the same ink he stained one of his front teeth so that, when his lips were half parted, the tooth appeared to be gone.

"There!" said he, gazing into the mirror once more. But as he gazed, his eyes wandered from his own face to a spot back of him.

Biceps had raised himself on one elbow on his cot, and with all the sharp scrutiny of a vicious animal, was observing him through his narrowed pig eyes.

"So!" John said to himself. "They suspect me already, or they've got some work for me to do. Something is in the wind, eh?"

He had the presence of mind to go on with his work, and was sure that Biceps believed that he had observed the new member of the gang without being discovered. The return of the Chinaman gave John the opportunity to return to his kitchen chair and turn over the pages of the daily which Biceps had ordered.

There on the second page were the headlines: "Perriton Still at Large. Mary Wales, in whose home young society man committed murder and attempted robbery, still prostrated. Message in bottle purporting to be from fugitive and claiming his innocence comes ashore at Briarwood harbor and is pronounced a fake by the police."

Beside the news story was a picture of the girl John had loved well enough to make his great sacrifice, and with a quick glance at Biceps on the cot, whose back was now turned, he pressed his face to the cut of her lovely head, and then deftly tore the page so that he might fold the picture and thrust it into one of the inside pockets of his ragged coat. Knowing that he must not run the risk of having Biceps know that he had been interested in any part of the daily, he was forced to open the door of the round stove and thrust the rest of the paper into the red coals.

"What you do?" squeaked Siam Charlie, when he had come back. "You burn paper, eh? You no good—like fool."

"I thought it was for me. I read it. *You* can't read. And Biceps is all in."

"Just same like fool," assented the Chinaman. "You no good. No can do!"

His wrath was interrupted by a tapping on the skylight. The shadow of a living creature had appeared there for a minute and was gone. A second later, through the crack beneath the skylight frame, a piece of paper was pushed into view, and then fell to the floor. The Chinaman seized it eagerly.

"You read to me," he said to John. "Maybe trouble. Maybe good luck. Read quick."

The paper was covered with words printed in pencil, as if the writer had not wished to make a piece of evidence by using handwriting. John read it aloud:

"Got big job. Send Biceps at once, back room at Madden's place. If he can't come, must have good man. Have him rub his ears as signal. LAWYER LIPMAN.

"You go?" asked Charlie, shooting his ratty glance into John's face.

"No," said John. "I wouldn't do. I don't want to go. Get Biceps."

"He no good, now," the Chinaman asserted, pointing to the cot and shaking his head like an emaciated Buddha. "You go."

John shook his head.

"Heh!" squeaked the yellow creature. "Heh! Heh! You been here week. No pay. I get you good job. I ask you no questions—no? If you no do good job—make money—I ask questions p'liceman. I say, 'Who's man?' Maybe he flind out."

"Confound your miserable hide!" said John. "Don't scream out so. I'll do it. Where is this meeting place?"

The Chinaman, seizing a piece of charcoal, stooped, drew out on the floor a plan of the streets, and showed John where he was to go.

"Stairs or fire escape?" asked Perriton.

"Stairs all right—daytime," said the other.

The mere joy of being outdoors where there was fresh air and sunshine made John realize that in his former career as a good-natured, useless idler in the lap of luxury, he had never understood the true values of life, or thanked God as he should, for those simple but rich pleasures which are ever present but are so little appreciated. He felt like a dead man come to consciousness, and released from a tomb. The stretch of pale blue between the tops of the dingy warehouse and tenement buildings, the cries of street venders, the swooping flight of pigeons, the smell of wind blowing over water, were to him appeals to his starved senses which nearly caused him to forget his mission.

As he walked along, it came to him, little by little, that he attracted no more attention than any other shabby individual amid the great flotsam and jetsam of the city. A blue-uniformed police officer at a street crossing caused him to gasp with the fear of the hunted, but as the patrolman gave him less notice than he was giving a dray horse eating his oaten dinner from a canvas bucket, the blood which he had felt leave his face surged back, and he went on with new confidence.

Society, through its servants, the law and the police, was looking for a nicely groomed young man in evening clothes, who was somewhere out in the woods and answered to the name, John Perriton. The man walking along in the depths of a city's overcrowded district, dirty, ragged, unshaven, and pale, would not be identified with the other —John Perriton was dead. John Pottle was a different fellow.

And so it was that in spite of his aversion to entering into a situation where the commission of a crime should be demanded of him, he felt a certain keenness for the possibilities of adventure, particularly if, in the course of it, he might find a chance to further his fortunes and begin the climb he had planned to make toward a new and better life, and a new and more useful career.

Madden's place proved to be a corner saloon on the street which ran along the river front. On all sides of it there were commission houses, wholesale liquor houses, and ship chandlers. Boxes and bales obstructed the sidewalks, and the cobbled streets were crowded with trucks. The saloon itself occupied a narrow space in an ancient building, the upper windows of which were so opaque with accumulated dust as to give the impression that all the space above the saloon and the stores had been abandoned.

John, pushing the flapping doors which led within, found that the narrow counter was lined with stevedores and teamsters who were being served by a bulldog-faced man. He nodded to this potentate of the place, and then, after lounging carelessly in front of the lunch counter, with its salt herring and cut pickles, opened the door leading into the back room, and, seeing that several tables were occupied by men and one or two women, he dropped into a chair and folded his hands in a puddle on the varnished table top.

"Rub your ears," said he to himself. "Well, here goes!"

Having given the signal he looked about. No one appeared to be paying any attention to him. He repeated the process without result.

Several times during the next half hour he rubbed his ears. But no one noticed him and, one by one, or in pairs, the patrons who had lingered over their drinks went away until two men who sat in the corner were all that were left.

John could not see the larger man, whose back was turned toward him, but he was certain that the man who faced him was not a criminal, or even a man who would have a taste for taking a risk of any kind. He was a stoop-shouldered creature with fishy, shifting eyes and thin lips, whose appearance was that of a scholar or a studious, unsuccessful lawyer. His cuffs which covered his thin wrists projected over his thin white hands, and the links in them rattled as he moved his arms. It was evident that he did not drink, for he had no glass before him, and it was evident that his habit of mind was imaginative, for most of the time he stared up at the ceiling or down at the wet and shining table top as if he were reflecting upon the problems of existence.

"Well, something has missed fire," John said to himself. "And waiting

here longer will make me too conspicuous."

He arose, yawned, and stood for a moment weighing his chances in case he should choose not to return to his refuge in the opium establishment, and report his failure. He had no money, no other place to go, and he felt that it was more than probable that, being under suspicion, he had been followed by some member of Meeker Joe's gang, who would check up his behavior, and, in case of treachery, bring about his delivery into the hands of the police. With these thoughts he started toward the door.

"Come here, you big boob!" said a coarse, familiar voice.

When John looked he saw that the man whose back had been turned, and who now addressed him, was the very man called Biceps he had left in Meeker Joe's den, supposedly drugged into a deep narcotic sleep.

"Come here and sit down. We got your signal, but it never pays to hurry things," he explained.

"You followed me?" asked John.

"Sure I followed you. If you'd pulled the double cross I'd have trailed you until I got the chance to put you back in the pen where you came from, I guess. While you was coming in the front door, I came in the back."

"Well, what's on?" Perriton asked.

"Shake hands with Mr. Lipman," said Biceps. "He's a lawyer—only they disbarred him five years ago. They do that to any lawyer that's too smart. And Mr. Lipman is smart all right. When he sends for me to pull something I know it's O. K. and a lot of kale in it. This time he's got a pippin! Tell this guy Pottle whatcher got, Mr. Lipman."

The ex-attorney spoke in a whining voice which rose as a sentence went forward, and was clipped off at every period by the click of his prominent teeth. John could see that this ratty man was used to being considered a superior by the crooks who worked under his orders, because he called John "Pottle," without using the term Mister, and the look in his eyes was one of secret contempt.

"Pottle," said he, "I'm a man of few words. Besides, I can explain this whole matter easier by showing you the papers in the case. Take a look at that."

He handed Perriton a letter written on old-fashioned blue-lined paper with a figure of the goddess, Liberty, embossed on the corner. Pinned to the corner of this letter was an advertisement clipped from a country newspaper. On the clipping was written, "Cause," and on the letter in a different hand from that of the sender was the word "Effect."

The advertisement read:

A young, rich, and beautiful heiress, tired of the attentions of unworthy men, wishes to meet a young farmer with some property. Object matrimony. Address Attorney. Box 21.

John could not suppress a laugh. He pointed at Lipman and said: "You are the heiress."

"So far, he is," said Biceps. "Read the letter."

He read it:

DEAR GRACE: You should not doubt me when I say that my aunt's executor will send me check for fifteen thousand dollars which I will make over to you for good faith the day we marry. You have mentioned your two brothers in your letters. Bring them with you when you come up next Thursday. I have learned to love you before ever seeing you. HENRY HORN.

"Great Scott!" John exclaimed. "He is about to walk into the trap, poor devil!"

"Yes, and we've now got to have a 'Grace' and her two brothers and some clothes, and maybe a mamma and a swell apartment and the show will be ready for the sucker," said Lipman,

with an evil smile. "Here is 'Grace' now. Hello, Jennie!"

A slim, attractive young girl, dressed as a factory worker might be dressed, had come in through the side door and was staring at the three men with large, apprehensive eyes.

"One of the smartest kids in the business," said Biceps with enthusiasm. "Come here, Jennie. Meet Pottle."

John took her little hand in his own, and the two stared with curiosity and questioning into each other's eyes. Those of the girl appeared to John to have behind them great, pathetic depths.

The moment she turned toward Biceps he tried to put his arm around her and draw her toward him.

"Always some little stranger, eh?" he said.

Her little fist shot out at Biceps' face.

"Leave me be!" she exclaimed. "I'm a crook, but I ain't anybody's plaything, and never have been. Take yer hands off!"

Biceps started toward her again.

"Let her alone!" said John, in a low, deep, threatening voice.

Biceps shrugged his shoulders, and, as he sat down, out of his piggy eyes came a hateful gleam which traveled first to Jennie's grateful smile of thanks, and then to John's square jaw.

"Here! Here!" the lawyer said in his whine. "Let the girl read the documents. How does that strike you, Jennie?"

"Ain't he soft?" said the girl. "I'd like a chance to trim this farmer guy. Fifteen thousand! Gee! I ain't never been in such big game."

"You've got to learn to be a swell lady," Lipman said. "If I could trust any one else I'd never have chosen you. If we get the money, I get half and you three divide the rest. I'm financing this."

"We all need outfits," said Biceps.

"Come on then, a secondhand emporium for us."

Lipman led the way out into the sunlight again, and the four walked briskly through many side streets until at last they came to a shop where ladies' evening dresses, sets of furs, and dress suits were hung in the window.

A fat woman with a greasy smile was perched behind the counter like an obese spider in a web of textiles.

"Staging another play, Jim?" she asked Lipman. "I promise yer there won't be such a bargain for yer this time."

"Suppose I gave you a nice job as a mother of a beautiful young heiress like Jennie, and all you had to do was to live in her apartment with her and her two brothers, Biceps and Pottle, who are two strong arms that work well and get no one into trouble. How would that suit you, Mag Stearns?"

"You never seen me overlook any mazuma!" the woman replied significantly. "What's the clothes you want?"

"A swell traveling dress for the lady," said Lipman. "Take Jennie into your try-on room and fix her up right with gloves and everything. Give these two men a chance to use a razor and a washbowl, and then a couple of good business suits for theirs!"

The cleaning-and-dressing proposal was an unwelcome suggestion to John, for it tended to restore him to the part of a gentleman again, in which he would the more easily be recognized. Reluctantly, he shaved off his growth of beard, brushed his hair, and washed his face. When he looked in the mirror again he appeared so like his old self that he stopped and touched Biceps on the shoulder.

"Look here," said he. "I don't believe I'll go on with this. I don't like the work. Get somebody else to do it."

"What's the matter?"

"I'm superstitious. I never had any luck in confidence games."

Biceps grinned malevolently. "You'll stick to this one so long as I stay in

it," he said. "I could go out of here and telephone the front office to a police inspector who's a friend of mine, and in ten minutes he'd be picking you up to ask you embarrassing questions. There's money in the game. Don't be a simp."

"All right," said John. "I'll go through with it."

As he changed into the newer suit of clothes, he shifted the newspaper picture of the girl who had been his intended wife from the pocket of one coat to that of the other, and in the moment when Biceps' head was turned away, he stole a look at the face which seemed to smile out of the paper at him with sympathy and understanding. And yet, at that moment, Perriton was sure that no turn of fortune could prevent her going through life to the end believing him guilty, and with the affection she had given him wiped out forever.

These reflections, as well as his new fear of being recognized and arrested, prevented him from having the interest he otherwise would have shown in the marvels of transformation which had been worked upon the three conspirators who now met again in the front of the secondhand clothing shop.

Jennie had changed from a somewhat bedraggled and tired girl to a young woman whose clothes lent to her personality some distinction. Biceps had not been able to move his eyes apart or wash the brutality from his face; but none the less, he now appeared as a moderately prosperous business man.

"Fine!" cried Lipman in approval. "Great! Fine! It's better than I thought. And you, Pottle, look like a gentleman, sure. Anybody'd think you'd just stepped off a Long Island estate. And, Jennie, you're as pretty as a picture! Confound me if you ain't a soulful lady! Ha, ha! It's great!"

"What next?" growled Biceps, not pleased at the inspection which Lipman now turned upon him.

"Why, a trip to the Horn homestead at Barnard Junction. You arrange for them to come down and visit and get married, and see to it that he brings a certified check for his legacy when he comes. It's all easy! I've been out to a scalper's and bought round-trip tickets for the three of you."

He distributed the pasteboards.

"Well, Mag," said he, "this little cast of characters in my new comedy has quality. And your next job is to find an apartment. See to it that you don't take any place where you have to sign a lease. Get it furnished with stuff you can rent, but make it look refined and all that. The idea is that I'm taking some risks on the money I'm advancing for expenses."

"We'll all need a bit of pocket money," John said to the lawyer, thinking that perhaps he might be able to slip away from Jennie and Biceps before the next day, when they were to start on their journey.

"I'll keep the pocket money," Biceps interrupted. "You get yours when the job is done." Then in a whisper he said to John: "No double cross, old top. If you do, I'll give you a taste of patent medicine you'll wish you never had."

"What's bitin' you?" John had the presence of mind to say.

"Come! Come!" growled Lipman, handing Jennie a small bill. "Cut this rag. Listen to me. I'm a man of few words. Brevity, brevity, brevity. There's work to be done. And until you three meet in the train you'd better all keep apart."

"I'll go with Mr. Pottle as far as my boarding place," said Jennie.

As soon as John found himself walking alone beside her, he asked whether Lipman had advised them to keep apart on account of the police.

"Weren't you wise?" the girl said. "Police—no! Lipman is the meanest, smartest go-between in the business. And he's afraid if three of us crooks is seen together by any of the Meeker Joe gang they'd go to him and ask him what was up and want to divide the loot—if there is any. The reason you had the luck to be in this is because you've got them gentleman's manners. You furnish the swell conversation, see?"

"And when we get this young farmer down to the city here and into your apartments how do we get the money from him?"

"What's the matter with you *to-day?*" Jennie asked, staring at John with her large, deep, pathetic eyes. "That ain't anything that can be doped out ahead. The guy will bring an O. K.'d check. Maybe we can get him to cash it. If he don't he can make it over to us after a fake marriage, and then we all make our get-away. If that don't work then it comes to violence, see? You and Biceps stick him up in the quiet of our apartment, take the check away from him, and hold him there until Lipman can work an indorsement onto the back of it and get the money. Anyhow, where there's big game, there's a way to get it."

"Sure," said John, affecting the wisdom of the underworld. "But I'm hungry. Let's you and I drop into a restaurant."

"Nothing doing," replied Jennie. "We're keeping under cover just now. How do I know how well the police know you? If you want to eat with me, I'll take you up to my lodgings. That's the kind of a girl I am. I ain't bad-hearted. You'll find that out. All I ask for a man is to be a good fellow and cut out all the love-making."

"That's me," John replied, and, following her, he dodged into a narrow entrance between an Italian grocery and a Jewish crockery shop, climbed the narrow, dark stairs, and at last found himself in a garret where, in one corner, there was a couch, a washbasin stand, and a little fireplace where the remains of a soft-coal fire was still burning.

Jennie poured some water into a tin coffee pot, found two frankfurters and two rolls in a paper bag, dropped the frankfurters in, and put the receptacle on the coals.

"Don't these clothes we got on look different from the room?" she asked. But John was studying deeper. Here in this garret, with a pale, slight, clear-skinned young girl whose jaw was square and features delicate, he sensed a new and careless comradeship he had never known before. With all other women he had felt the sense of an eternal contest; here was the perfect atmosphere of settled equality and comfort.

"Where did you come from?" he asked.

"Circus life," said she. "The red wagon was where I was born—and I thought once the red wagon was where I'd die. Ma gave birth to me one fall down in the Virginia mud. Lord! What rains and mud they have there! When she died it was in Emporia, Kansas, with a one-ring outfit. I was ten, then. She was worried about dying and leavin' me. I wear her necklace now. It's brass, I guess, because it turns the skin on my neck black. But it was hers."

"Then?" asked John.

"What's the use?" Jennie said, shrugging her shoulders. "I've played it alone. First I learned short-change cashiering. I was an artist on that. But con games have been my specialty. I'm good bait because I look innocent. Gee, I'm tired of it!"

"Let's quit," John suggested.

"Quit! What's the matter with you?" asked the girl, folding her hands over her knees. "How am I going to live?

How are you going to live? What's life without being in the game? You get a taste of the life, you grow up in it, you get a record, and how do you ever get rid of it? Sometimes I've thought, when the rain beats on that tin roof outside, that some man—— But I'm a fool. That's why I've always kept straight and—— Here! Your frankfurter is done."

"It's hot here."

"Take off your coat."

John threw his new garment on the couch, took his frankfurter between his fingers, and, going to the window, looked out across the chimney pots and black, red, and gray sunlit roofs of the tenements, where, among the flapping white clothes hung out to dry, children and pigeons played.

He did not see that from the breast pocket of his coat there peeped out the newspaper clipping which bore the picture of Mary Wales, or that, when his back was turned, Jennie, watching him as a cat watches a mouse, took from the pocket the picture, looked at it quietly, and thrust it back before he saw her.

"What have you been doing lately?" she asked.

"Working. I've been working on—on structural iron work," John answered.

"Let's see your hands."

John held them out.

"What do you want to lie to me for?" said she angrily. "I like you. You don't have to lie to me. I wouldn't squeal on you. You did me a good turn to-day when you made Biceps behave himself. I know you."

"You know me?"

"You think I'm a fool? You're John Perriton—that's who you are."

John did not, before that moment, know the blind terror of being found out. He leaped at the girl, who now so lightly and sneeringly revealed her discovery of his identity, and, clapping his hand over her soft lips, held her viciously, while he stared about the room to see if any one else was concealed there. Loosing his hold he sprang to the door and threw it open. The hall was empty.

"Behave, behave," said Jennie. "You act like a kid. I'm not going to squeal on you. Here's my hand."

John took it doubtfully.

"Now, listen to me," she said. "Take advice from somebody who knows the game and is willing to help you."

"Yes."

"Well, don't let Lipman or Biceps get wise to you. That means you've got to go through with the robbery of this young farmer. It's that or some false step that'll make the Meeker Joe gang put you in the hands of the inspectors. They've got a murder charge on you. That swell girl in the picture is your girl. I'm wise. Does she think you did it?"

"Yes."

"And you did it?"

"No."

"Well, leave this to me. Beat it now. I'll meet you and Biceps on the train. And you and I will milk this Horn feller because you and I need the money. It's got to be done. More'n likely Biceps has got a shadow following you. And you've got to play square. Don't you try to put over any double cross. And if you don't want to put in another night at Meeker Joe's hop joint here's half an iron man. Beat it!"

That night John spent at a sailor's lodging home on the river front. He went to sleep at last with his heart full of misgivings. To be captured meant, no doubt, the paying of the extreme penalty for a killing of which he was innocent. But not to join the two other members of the Meeker Joe gang in their scheme for robbery would be to so act that he would be betrayed into the hands of the law. Upon awakening he continued the debate within his

mind, and, concluding finally that for the present, at least, he must go on as a part of Lawyer Lipman's conspiracy, he went to the station and boarded the train for Barnard Junction.

Of one thing he was certain; his movements were being dogged by some member of the Meeker Joe gang. When he had entered the lodging house the night before a man had followed him and asked the old sea cook who was proprietor of the place to come up the creaking stairs and see whether he had undressed and had crept between the blankets. John resolved to play out his part of rascal for the time, with all the ability and shrewdness he could summon to the task.

As he elbowed his way through the waiting passengers, Biceps plucked him by the sleeve and whispered in his ear:

"Lipman is over there—see him? Don't recognize him, see? He's just been checking us up. That's the way we do in our gang—check up and check up. And if a man plays the double cross on us—God help him!"

"That's good for *me,*" said John, climbing onto the train. "Good morning, Jennie."

"Good morning—John," said she, smiling up at him.

Something in that smile gave him new confidence in the girl with her slim body and her big, pathetic, observant eyes, and he talked to her in low tones while the two hours passed which took the three to Barnard Junction.

As they descended from the train, a young man whose face was bronzed with outdoor life came forward to meet them.

"Henry Horn?" said Biceps.

"Yes, sir, that's me."

"Let me introduce you to my sister, the widow, Mrs. Becket," said John with his best manner, "and this is my brother, Hartley Doane."

"We better drive right out home," Horn said, gazing with wondering eyes at Jennie's beauty.

"She's put his eyes out," whispered Biceps.

"Well, just one minute, Mr. Horn," said John. "Our mother asked us to telegraph her whether you'd return with us for a visit to our home. There are some things to arrange, and while I don't want to hurry matters——"

"It's all *right,*" said the countryman, with a final stare of wonder at the girl. "I know her character through her letters, if I may say so. I'll go back with you."

"Send a telegram, George," said John to Biceps. "You know how mother will worry."

"That's right," Horn added. "I lost *my* mother last June. That's what made me so lonesome. I'm glad I always did what I could for her."

Jennie looked up at him with a quick glance of inspection.

"Gee, things are slipping along fine!" said Biceps in John's ear. "You are some clever worker."

"Thank you," John replied in a low tone. "If you'll put the message to Lipman on the wire we can start."

The drive was a pleasant one for John. Never before had it been so plain to him what blessings there could be in the spaces outside of cities. In the days when he could go and come as he pleased in a motor car he had never noticed as he did on this clear, cold, sunlit noon the variety of color and form in the smoky gray of the bare woods, the arch of the bottomless sky, the rise, heave, ripple, and break of the valleys and hills, and the soft brown stretches of stubble field and pasture land, now as tawny as a lion's hide.

Furthermore, he was delighted and amused by the conversation affected and full of guile with which Jennie entertained the broad-shouldered, simple-minded Horn on the front seat

of the vehicle while the old nag trotted over the country road.

"There's the home," said the farmer at last.

It was a typical farm homestead, its oyster-shell white relieved by the dark green of the blinds and of the front door upon which there shone a polished brass knocker.

The home! All three of the homeless sat up and stared at it with dreamy eyes wistfully.

"I never left here but once," said Horn. "That was when I went to learn the grocery business at Bedford. Then father died and I came back and took charge."

"You had some money left you by an aunt?" hinted John.

"Yes, it's come—a check from Austin, Texas—from a lawyer feller, Mr. Doane."

John winced; he could not accustom himself to his aliases. He felt the humiliation of the amateur confidence man as the victim showed the three over the house.

"How'd you like to live here?" Horn asked Jennie when they had returned to the musty old parlor where dried flowers in oval glass frames and ancient steel engravings of snorting stags adorned the walls.

"It is the kind of place you see on the stage," said Jennie solemnly, "I'd like it."

Biceps, who had not dared to try his luck at "gentleman's conversation," sneered.

"I've been lonely here," said Horn simply.

"Of course," replied John. "Don't you want to take my sister for a little stroll, now? We must all be going back soon to catch the train. Perhaps you'd better wait over and come to visit us to-morrow. Mother wouldn't be quite ready until then." He thought of Lawyer Lipman and greasy Mag Stearns, already busy, fixing up the scenery of respectability.

"Just as you say, Mr. Doane," Horn replied, and with overdone country manners he offered Jennie his arm.

With the girl he strolled out into the apple orchard, pointing out here and there the simple objects which he believed would interest her.

Biceps watched them from the window.

"What a rube!" he said.

But John did not answer him, because once more there had come to his mind the reflection that almost anything could be accomplished if one had resourcefulness enough to devise a plan. Indeed he *was* devising a plan. So active was his brain that all the way back to the city that afternoon he seemed like a man in a trance.

The moment the three had stepped off the train, Biceps ran to the telephone booth and called up the lawyer.

"It's all right," he said, slapping John on the shoulder, "they've got the apartment. This is going to be a walkaway. Here's the address. You and Jennie beat it down there."

The moment John was alone with Jennie, he said: "You're sick."

"Sick of life," the girl answered, "that's all."

"No, that isn't what I mean. You must pretend to be sick, pretend to be suffering. It must be some cold or fever, don't you see?"

"For what?"

"To get this Horn man soft-hearted, you must be in bed very sick. You must wring the sympathy out of him."

"I get you," said Jennie. "Maybe he'll fall for that."

"And Mag Stearns must be a feeble mother," John went on, "so he will be forced to take care of you—sit with you."

"All right. I'll meet you in our new home to-morrow," said Jennie. "You'll find the sickest girl you ever saw."

John smiled.

He smiled again after he had climbed the stairs of the apartment the next day. Lipman was there rubbing his hands. Biceps, chewing on unlit cigars and playing cards with Mag Stearns over a rented table in the parlor, periodically looked at Jennie who, in a pretty dressing sack, was propped up on the pillows, and as often as he looked he said: "That's great. This feller Pottle is a star. He's sure a pippin for ideas."

"Take a hand at cards," said Mag Stearns, grinning with her eyes instead of her mouth.

Jennie climbed out of the bed, and all drew up around the table.

It was not long, however, before the bell rang. Biceps put on his coat and hid a bottle of beer under the sofa. Mag Stearns prinked before the mirror. Jennie jumped back into the bed and closed her eyes, practicing the look of one in pain. Lipman cautiously peeked through the curtain at the door.

"It's our man," he said. "Come on, you two loafers. We can go down the fire escape. Out this window! Too many brothers will spoil a love scene."

As they went, John lingered behind on the fire escape. It was he who saw the countryman's face as it showed the surprise and pain of learning of Jennie "Becket's" illness. It was he who saw the big hand of Henry Horn touch Jennie's white forehead tenderly, and he smiled once more to himself, for he believed that he was the one among them all who saw the end.

Two days later, at ten in the evening, he returned, as he had done several times before, to inquire how his sister fared. Mag Stearns had stepped out for a moment; the door was unlatched, and John stole in softly and peeked through the portières.

In a chair drawn up beside the bed Henry Horn sat with a book in his hand, reading aloud to Jennie. All about her there were flowers and baskets of fruit, and books, and magazines. The room was a veritable bower of the attentions of the countryman. Now and then, as John looked, he saw the brown hand of the farmer crawl over to pat the white hand of Jennie upon the coverlet.

John smiled again, and, behind the back of Horn, he made a signal to Jennie. She saw it and found some excuse to send the farmer on an errand. John wrapped the curtain about him as the farmer went out, and no sooner did the door close than Jennie leaped from the bed.

"Look here," she said, burying her finger tips in John's wrist. "You're on the level. I know who you are, and you can trust me not to squeal. Can I trust you?"

He nodded.

"Well, y'understand I can't go through with this. The man loves me. And such a man! I didn't know they came that way. D'y'suppose after all he's done for me I could rob him? No, I couldn't—I've got to play the double cross, after all. If the gang find it out they'll kill me. They'll get me. You'll see. I'll be found in the river, or with my throat slit. But I don't care, I'm ready to die. I'm going to tell him everything. Yes, I am. I'm going to tell him and let him strike me in the face. But he's got fifteen thousand in cash—in cash! right in his pocket. And I'm not going to let 'em take that money from him."

"You want to tell him?"

"Yes."

"We will do something that will surprise you."

"I don't care," cried Jennie. "I love him and I don't care."

"Hush, he's coming."

John hid once more in the curtain, and was forced to see Horn's surprise when he found Jennie standing beside

the table; he was forced to be an eavesdropper.

"Stand over there," said she fiercely to the countryman. "I've got something to say to you. You're in a con game and maybe worse. Listen to me!"

Her voice was lowered to a whisper, almost vicious in its low explosions as she went on. John knew that such a girl would spare herself nothing. He could read on Horn's face that she was telling him the whole story with fierce, direct narrative. The young farmer had dropped his arms at his side, stupefied, unable for the moment to fully grasp the significance of her story.

At last, however, he leaned down and stared fixedly for a moment at her unblinking eyes. Then going to the window he gazed down into the street for several moments, thinking. Three or four times he passed his hand across his forehead. Finally, he drew in a deep breath. He took a wallet thick with bills from his inside pocket and looked at the smooth edges of the bank notes.

"I don't care so much about the money," said he, "but you——"

Jennie bowed her head, and then fell forward on the table in her misery.

"Don't you cry," said Horn. "Don't you cry, Jennie. I guess you've done as square by me as I could expect."

He put his strong hands under her shoulder pits, raising her body until he could infold her in his arms.

"It won't make any difference, I guess. You must love me."

"Love you?" cried Jennie. "Love you? There ain't anybody else I've ever loved!"

"You'd better hurry," exclaimed John, showing himself. "I'm with you on this, Jennie. But Biceps has been watching you through that door for five minutes. Grab your clothes and take the fire escape. Biceps has a gun. He'll use it. He gave me one to use. He's been suspicious of you, anyhow. Hurry!"

The sound of loud knocks already sounded at the door.

"Listen," whispered John to Horn. "Don't leave the girl for a minute. They'll kill her if they get her. She's played the double cross. Carry her far away, do you hear? Here's a gun."

"Yes," answered the countryman. "What will become of you?"

"I'll take my chances behind this curtain."

Jennie seized his hand as she fled toward the rear window.

"I won't forget you," said she, calling back from the fire escape.

The two were almost gone.

Already the door was straining and creaking with the pressure of Biceps' shoulders. It burst in suddenly, and the yeggman rushed past John, shooting twice as he ran at the fire-escape window. Twice the shots of Horn's revolver belched back, filling the room with smoke.

Perriton knew that the empty apartment had told Biceps that the prey had escaped, and that one of the Meeker Joe gang had betrayed him. He knew that Biceps would be able to shoot down at the fleeing pair on the fire escape from the window ledge.

From the mantel he seized a cheap plaster of Paris statue of Venus, the Goddess of Love, and, grasping the lady about the neck, he dealt Biceps a blow from behind. The yeggman went down in a heap.

A few minutes later John went down the stairs, out into the city once more, homeless again.

The fourth story in Richard Washburn Child's moving-picture series will be called "The Light on the Wall." It will appear two weeks hence, in the June month-end number, on sale May 23rd.

The Twenty-First Prisoner of Dom Sebastian

By H. Hesketh Prichard

Author of "Don Q.," Etc.

Prisons versus ingenuity. Another example of the grit of men incarcerated in grim dungeons

DOM SEBASTIAN, the knight of Tartarro, was a man whose fame as a fighter and duelist was known through all Portugal and Spain. He had fought in many of those single combats which were the vogue of the times, and in all of them he had been victorious. So far, there were a dozen like him to be found between the Tagus and the Danube, but in one point he held a unique and ominous record.

It may not be generally known that in the early days of the duel the stakes of the opponents were remorselessly high. To be defeated in a duel meant that the body of the vanquished, alive or dead, became the absolute property of the victor. He could kill him or keep him alive, treat him well or condemn him to perpetual slavery. In order to show to what a length this "rule of the game" was carried, we have only to refer to the duel between De Fendilles and d'Aguerres, when De Fendilles refused to take the field until he had caused a gallows to be built, upon which he should hang d'Aguerres when he had defeated him. There are other cases in which the victors actually burned their defeated rivals upon the very ground on which the combat had just taken place.

Now it has been said that in one particular Dom Sebastian held an ominous record. Here, there, and everywhere, he had fought and conquered. Some of his foes he had slain; in these instances he had dragged the body round the lists and departed. But in the cases—and they were several—where his opponent had yielded or been knocked senseless by the great mace with which Dom Sebastian habitually fought, the knight had carried away his prisoner to the castle of Tartarro, which faced, and still faces, the raging Atlantic; and from the moment the grim gates had closed behind them, no whisper as to the fate of those unhappy men ever reached the outer world.

Once or twice, in early days, boon companions had been rash enough to question the knight of Tartarro on the point, but his answer, though clear, was apt to put a check on curiosity. "If you wish to find out, most illustrious sir," he would say, "let us come together in combat, and then if St. Diego be willing, you will find out indeed."

One or two accepted his challenge, entered the lists with him, and were conquered, but the secret remained as close as ever, until black fear lowered about the name of the knight and his castle, and those who saw its high turrets afar off crossed themselves, while mariners upon the sea muttered a prayer when they raised its few dim lights above the breakers.

Such was the state of affairs when young Sir Harry Wentworth met the

knight of Tartarro, Dom Sebastian, at the court of the King of Portugal, and it chanced that the pair made a very pretty quarrel. According to all accounts, Dom Sebastian forced it upon the Englishman. They met in the duel, and Sir Harry, who was a slight man, was quickly swept to the ground by one well-aimed blow of the terrible mace, and he, too, vanished into the castle of Tartarro.

Now it chanced that before Sir Harry Wentworth fought, he wrote a letter to his friend, Sir Michael Dane, of the county of Cornwall. A part of it is irrelevant, but we may quote this much:

> And so, Michael, I meet this dom tomorrow. The choice of weapons—according to the laws of the duello, seeing that I flung the wine in his face—lay with him, and thus it comes about that I must fight with a mace: your weapon rather than mine. Indeed you and the dom would make a glorious match, for they call him the strongest man in Portugal, and surely there are few stronger than you in England. I have already told you of the mystery concerning those whom he has conquered. Their fate is unknown. It may well be mine, and I own I shudder when I think upon the man's yellow eyeballs and dark, secret face. But enough. It may chance that you and I will yet laugh together over this letter. . . . Should I hold my own against Dom Sebastian, I purpose to sail for London within a few days, where I look to meet you. Till then or for ever farewell.
>
> HAL.

The ship that was to have brought Sir Harry Wentworth brought only his letter, and when Sir Michael had pondered it and some concluding words added by another hand that told briefly of how Sir Harry had been stunned and carried off to an unknown doom, he rose and swore an oath that he would seek out Dom Sebastian and discover from him the fate of his friend.

Sir Michael stared downward from the last high spur of the mountain to where, upon a point of rock almost surrounded by the sea, the dark bastions of a castle showed against the sky.

"Now, at last, Thomas, we see Tartarro!" he said to his squire.

Thomas nodded. He was a man of few words.

"A strong place!" Sir Michael went on. "And Dom Sebastian has not left its shelter since he carried Sir Harry with him over that arch of rock which binds his island castle to the shore. Well, let us ride down and look upon it more closely."

The horses slipped and sidled along the bare shoulder of the hill until they gained the level of the archway, beyond which yawned a second fissure in the rock.

Sir Michael drew rein at the hither side of the archway, and instructed his squire:

"Go forward, Thomas, and present my greetings to Dom Sebastian. Say that I desire a few words with him."

The squire crossed the narrow path over the arch, and sounded a call. After some parley, the drawbridge was lowered, and Thomas disappeared within the castle. When he reëmerged, he was accompanied by a knight who Sir Michael at once guessed must be Dom Sebastian himself.

Never had he looked on such a man. His height was not above the ordinary, but his chest was round, and deep, and a barrel, his arms long and almost distorted with muscular development. He wore a tunic of dark crimson over a shirt of chain mail.

He bowed low, uttering the formal greeting of the time in the manner of the court of Portugal, and asking in what way he could have the joy of serving Sir Michael.

Sir Michael bowed in his turn. "I desire to know how it is with Sir Harry Wentworth."

Dom Sebastian smiled grimly.

"The knight of whom you speak was conquered by me in single combat during the court festivals after Easter," he replied briefly.

"So I learned. And after?"

Dom Sebastian's face grew black.

"I do what I will with my own, and I render account of my doing to no man."

Sir Michael held silence for a moment.

"Yet I would beg you to remember of your courtesy that I have voyaged far across the seas from England to gain an answer to the question which I have asked," he said at length.

Dom Sebastian looked at Michael. "And how do you propose to gain it?"

"First by asking courteously. This I have done. Next, should that fail, by challenging to combat the one man who can give me an answer."

Dom Sebastian inclined his head. "Grant me a question in my turn," said he. "Why do you so exceedingly desire to learn if Sir Harry Wentworth be in good health?"

"He was my most dear friend. We grew up together."

A certain change passed over Dom Sebastian's manner. "Pardon me, sir knight, I did not know such ties bound you. I regret that my brusquerie may have pained you. Your friend is in my castle. I will lead you to him at once."

Sir Michael paused. It was not an invitation to be lightly accepted.

"And after you have seen him," continued Dom Sebastian, "I am sure that you will give me the pleasure of your company upon this strip of turf, so that I may either send you to join him, or you may succeed where so many have failed."

And the lord of Tartarro shook his mace, and laughed, and turned to lead the way across the drawbridge.

Thomas, who stood at Sir Michael's knee, holding his own horse by the bridle, made a jingling with the horse furniture while he whispered: "Treachery! 'Ware treachery!"

Sir Michael slowly dismounted. "Faith, Thomas, you are right in that," said he. "It were wiser to fight first." And he called to Dom Sebastian, who was already across the drawbridge.

But the burly figure moved on until Sir Michael shouted again, then Dom Sebastian wheeled about as he stood below the portcullis.

"What would you?"

"I would fight first."

"I have as much stomach for the fight as you, Sir Englishman, but since you desire so greatly to see your friend, it were well to see him now," returned Dom Sebastian, advancing a step.

"Wherefore?"

"You may not live to see him after," was the derisive reply.

So Dom Sebastian held the other in talk, while Sir Michael, moving unconsciously forward in the heat of argument, stood at last in the gateway of the castle. Dom Sebastian stepped angrily back, and of a sudden Michael was aware of an upward glance and a sudden lighting of the somber eyes of his enemy, but the warning came too late. Ere he could spring aside, something crashed upon his head, and darkness fell over him.

When Sir Michael came again to his senses, he was first aware of a tangle-bearded face and a voice he knew well crying out his name; then he felt eager hands on his. Slowly, as through a dream, he knew that the face was the face of Harry Wentworth.

"Hal!" he groaned.

"Michael!" answered the voice.

Presently, drawing his body up against the wall, he looked dazedly round. He found himself in a vaulted, well-like chamber, cut, as it seemed, from the living rock.

"Where am I?"

"Alas! Michael, you are in the power of the cruelest fiend in the peninsula."

"Ah, I begin to remember! Dom Sebastian—he took me by treachery—a falling bar—a stone—I know not what

crashed down upon me as I stood with him beneath the portcullis. I had no thought of trickery, for we two stood alone, his men drawn up twenty paces from us. But, Hal, I can half forgive him, so rejoiced am I to find you yet alive."

But Sir Harry shook his head. "It is not for long."

And now as Sir Michael's brain cleared, he saw that his friend was in poor case enough. His clothes were ragged and soiled by the foulness of the dungeon rock chamber, and they hung about his bony frame as on a scarecrow. He was become a broken man, with panic in his eyes, crouching and palpitating at every sound.

"Cheer up, Hal! It is true that we are prisoners, but prisoners have escaped ere now, and will again."

But the words had no effect on Sir Harry. "The prisoners of Dom Sebastian never escape," he answered.

"What? Are they all here in the castle? If report speaks truly, they must be not less than a score."

"Aye, so they tell me; yet I believe that you and I are the only prisoners in the castle now."

"And the rest?"

"They are dead."

"He kills them?"

"Yes."

"In what manner?"

"He puts them in this cell."

Sir Michael once more looked round the wet, dark walls.

"It is a loathly place, but even here men could live for a long season, and with each day might dawn some chance or strategy for escape."

"You do not comprehend Dom Sebastian's nature. How could you? But I will explain. Look up. You see those iron bars?"

Michael raised his eyes. High above them was an opening to the outer air. It seemed to be a natural aperture, shaped into a square by rough masonry, and defended by four stout iron bars. It was some fifteen feet from the floor, and below the rock bent slightly inward. Nothing could be more hopeless, from the viewpoint of escape.

"What of them?"

"It is through those bars that death comes."

"Speak plainly, man!"

For answer Harry touched his comrade's shoulder. "Listen! What do you hear?"

"I hear the murmur of water."

"You hear the waves beating upon the rock. The walls of this cell are washed by the Atlantic. At the spring tides it pours through the bars of the window. Don't you understand? That is how Dom Sebastian's prisoners die. They drown like rats in a barrel."

"Thunder of God!" cried Sir Michael. "To perish in such a fashion!"

"So have they all perished. They have all lain in this cell as you and I now lie. They have all been told the secret of the place as I was told, and then they all have waited"—Sir Harry shuddered, and his wild eyes told their own story—"waited as I have waited, and you and I must wait."

Sir Michael thought long, with his gaze upon the ground, then suddenly he asked: "How long have you been in this cell?"

"Six weeks, I think."

"Then you have survived more than one spring tide!"

"Ah, there comes the worst cruelty of all. The high tides always send some water into this place, but not always enough to drown the prisoner. It is only on occasion of the highest rise, or if the tide be backed by a strong wind from the north or the west, that the sea floods in, mounting sometimes to that mark." Sir Harry pointed to the stains left by the water many feet above their heads, and only some four feet below the stone window.

"If he would come and brain me with

his mace," went on Sir Harry, "I could stand and meet death with joy. But to sit here and watch the water lapping softly over the edge above there, then stealing in drops downward that grow into dripping streams, and by and by the waves breaking and splashing through the bars till the cold gathers about your feet. I have waited with the water to my chin through the hours until the tide sank and the water round me sank also."

"But how——" began Sir Michael.

Sir Harry foresaw the question. "I cannot tell you how the water went, but it drained away slowly, and I lived to face my death once more. Some day there will come a wind from the west, sooner or later it must come, though Dom Sebastian told me one unhappy prisoner lived here four months before the end."

Sir Michael stared at his comrade.

"How many days must elapse before the next high tide?" he asked.

"The time is near, but of that they will warn us before it is due, so that in expectation we may die many deaths."

"If I but held Dom Sebastian by the throat!"

"There is no chance of that, Michael."

"Who knows? We are not drowned men yet. While life stirs in us, there is hope, and I would that my head did not ache so plaguily, for we need all our wits," and then he fell silent again for a long space.

At length Sir Harry spoke: "How came you to be brought here by Dom Sebastian?"

Michael told the story. "It is strange that Dom Sebastian would not fight—for he is said to be greedy of battle—yet he captured me thus treacherously."

"Had you been a weakling, as I am, doubtless he would have fought gladly; but you, Michael, are such a man as cravens do not gladly fight, and I cannot marvel that Dom Sebastian feared the issue."

"That may be so," agreed Michael. "Well, let me sleep now, for I shall need my strength; and when I have slept we will speak further and make examination of this place. I have no desire to die like a blind puppy in a horse pond."

Five minutes later Sir Michael slept calmly, while his friend looked upon him and marveled at his hardihood.

That same evening the two prisoners made a thorough examination of their prison. It had but two salient features. First, there was the barred opening looking seaward; secondly, high in the roof, a species of trapdoor through which they were fed. This trapdoor Sir Harry said was opened once a day and food flung down. To attempt to reach it was hopeless, as it was full twenty feet from the ground. Beneath the barred window was an outthrust of the rocky wall in which some prisoner of the past had endeavored to carve footholds in order to cling a little longer to life as the water rose about him.

While Michael was trying these footholds, wondering if he might by any means gain some suggestion or plan of escape, the trapdoor was flung open and a man looked down into the dimness of the dungeon.

"Ah, Sir Michael," called the jeering voice of Dom Sebastian, "you wished to know the fate of your friend; is your curiosity satisfied, now that you have come to share it? Without doubt he has told you the secret of your prison. Is it not ingenious?"

"You treacherous hound!" answered Sir Michael, "I would we stood face to face fairly. But that is too much to hope for from a coward!"

Dom Sebastian laughed again, loudly and long.

"The rats squeak in the trap," he said,

"as rats will. But they will squeak more shrilly yet ere all be done."

With that he left them.

Sir Michael lay a long time, thinking. "When comes the jailer with food?" he inquired at length.

"Miguel? He comes shortly."

"I would talk with him."

"He is a surly dog," said Sir Harry, "but he is never unwilling to throw a gibe at a doomed man."

As it happened, when Miguel brought their provision, he spoke, grumbling that he must be at pains to fetch food and water for men who would soon be carrion.

"You would not leave us to perish of hunger and thirst, good Miguel," mocked Sir Michael.

"Thirst! You will have water and to spare after sundown on the second day!" retorted the jailer. "If it were daytime at high tide, I might cheer myself with the sight of you swimming round and round, seeking for a handhold on these walls and not finding so much as a wrinkle to fit a finger. Lord! what sport it hath given me many a time to watch those who went before you gasp, and choke, and sink, outworn by vain struggling!"

"Then they die and trouble you no more!" said Sir Michael.

"Nay, I am not even then rid of them, for it is my part, when I judge the last breath has gone from them, to open the little sluice whereby the sea runs back whence it came. There are but two of us, mind you, whom our lord trusts with the secret of this dungeon, José and I, and it is a secret that must be closely kept or our necks would pay for it," said the jailer.

"And the corpses are left to lie and rot in the slime?"

"How think you, then, I could set the trap ready for the next vermin my lord brings home?" snarled Miguel. "It is not ended thus easily. Nay, for I must descend and with José drag their pestilent bodies upward through this hole, for only from this upper chamber can we cast them forth to burial in the sea."

Michael laughed. "It gives me comfort to know, good Miguel, that this big body of mine will draw many a grunt from you ere your aching arms dispose of me forever!"

"Have I not felt your weight already, accursed Englishman, when I let you down by the windlass into the pit? For that reason will I starve you henceforth to the day of your burial."

The following twenty-four hours found Michael busy, but try as he would, he could find no hope of escape. And through the hours he and Harry could hear the sea lapping greedily against the wall without, and knew that each tide brought the water creeping up toward the little aperture through which death must reach them.

By afternoon of the next day the waves began to splash in, and ere the tide receded the prisoners were wading breast high.

And now once again they received a visit from Dom Sebastian.

"Greeting, gallant knights and guests of Tartarro!" cried he, "I much fear you will take a chill. Forgive me and permit me——" He called for Miguel, and gave some order, and soon the water in which they stood began to sink.

It sank from their breasts to their waists, and from their waists to their knees, until at the last they were standing in a mere puddle upon the rocky floor.

"You find that better?" said the hateful voice of their captor. "Let me see! It is within a couple of hours of sunset, and the wind is rising. There will be three fathoms of water in the cell ere dawn. I grieve to think that you will have but a damp lodging to-night. In the meantime, is there nothing that I as host can provide for my guests?"

"There is one thing," answered Sir Michael.

"And what is that?"

"I beg for one good meal, a meal from your own table."

"But you have already eaten."

"Not so; Miguel would starve us that I may weigh the lighter for my burial."

Dom Sebastian broke out into a tornado of wrath against the jailer. After a time, the lord of Tartarro spoke to his prisoners again.

"What would you have, you who soon must die?"

"I would eat once more of flesh of swine and sheep, and drink again of your famous wine ere I make my last fight with the water," said Sir Michael.

Dom Sebastian struck his hands together. "Your boon is granted," said he. "To-night your food shall come from my own table. You will have time for good digestion, fair knights, before the water begins to flow," and, laughing, he shut down the trapdoor.

"A very squalid villain!" commented Sir Harry.

"Yet he sends us flesh and wine!"

"Only in order that we may the longer be able to struggle against the water, in order to keep us the longer a-dying, to add to our torture by the increase of our strength!"

"Aye, aye, I see his intention well enough. Now, how may the wine come to us?"

"Miguel will lower it with a rope, as he lowers the water for our drinking," said Sir Harry, in surprise. "How else could it come?"

Sir Michael seized his comrade by the arm. "Why, Harry, therein lies our only hope. Have you not seen that Miguel leans over when he lets down the rope with our meager provision? But if Dom Sebastian keeps his word and sends a goodly portion of flesh and wine, the weight will cause the good Miguel to lean over more than usual, and perhaps even twist the rope round his hand—one swift jerk, Harry, and we might find ourselves three in the prison, instead of two, and much do I desire to speak with Miguel."

Sir Harry sighed. "But how can that help us?"

"It is hard to say yet. Any change may bring us a chance. Who can tell?"

After this, the hours passed slowly while they listened to the rising noises of the sea, and the wind screamed through the bars of their window. So twilight came early. The gloom of night enshrouded their prison, and the two knights began to wonder whether, after all, Dom Sebastian had not deceived them. Hunger and thirst gained upon them, for Miguel had brought no food since the day before. Chilled, wet, and weary, Sir Michael still strove to cheer his companion.

But at length, just when the spindrift began to blow in upon them from the sea, the trapdoor was pulled open, and the sour face of Miguel, illumined by a torch, peered down.

"The illustrious Dom Sebastian sends you greeting and this provender. Have a care how you handle the bottle of wine, though to tell the truth, little enough of it will reach you, for I have slipped my knife through the skin and taken toll of my lord's bounty."

As he said these words, he bent over and lowered a basket at the end of a rope.

"You, Harry, seize the basket, and leave the rest to me," whispered Michael. "Now!"

As Harry's hands touched the basket, Michael caught at the rope and jerked it mightily. With a stifled cry, Miguel lost his balance and fell headlong, crashing down upon the rocky floor, and there lay motionless between them.

"He is dead," whispered Michael, "and we have one the less against us, nor could we otherwise have won the

rope which may come to mean life to you and to me, Harry. Now let us eat, for we shall need all our vigor during the night we have to face."

Before they ended their hurried meal, the water was lapping about their knees.

"Now our Lady grant that the wind slackens the while I make a cast for our salvation," said Michael.

"What do you mean? What are you about to do?"

"I have fastened a stone to one end of the rope, and I will throw it as the wind gives me opportunity, through the bars of the window. If it finds lodgment there, we will make the other end fast by that iron ring to which some poor prisoner of the past has been chained. Thus we may perchance have somewhat to cling to for support while the water is at its height, and so avoid the fate of those who were here before us."

And now the water began to burst through the bars with a great spouting of foam. Huge waves thundered against the rock without, and sent their overflow into the dungeon. But Sir Michael, taking advantage of every lull and break in the attack of the storm, threw again and again at the window, and Sir Harry had sunk into despair, when at length, by some happy chance, the stone caught firmly. And only just in time, for soon the prisoners were lifted from their feet, and the water poured continuously through the bars, and Sir Harry understood how miserably he must have perished but for his friend's sinews and mother wit.

Suddenly, while half swimming in order to prevent too great a tension on the rope, he felt Michael catch hold of his arm and pull him into the darkest corner of the dungeon. A minute later above the noises of the gale they heard a voice calling them by name, and an arm with a torch was thrust through the trapdoor. They gave no answer, being indeed much occupied in keeping themselves from being dashed against the walls by the seas which spouted and roared about them.

Next, broken words reached them from the trapdoor.

"No man can live in yonder caldron, lord; they lie drowned with broken fingers, clutching at the floor of rock," said a harsh voice.

"I fear it is so, José. I fear they are already dead!" said Dom Sebastian regretfully, then he cried upon the name of Miguel.

And as Miguel came not, he cursed him terribly for a drunken sot who had stolen the wine intended for the prisoners, and was in all probability sleeping away his debauch. And soon after the blot of light through the trapdoor faded again to darkness.

For long the two knights hung, numbed with cold, to the rope, and Harry felt as if awakened from a painful dream when he was aroused by Michael.

"By all the saints, Harry, the water is sinking. Dom Sebastian, believing us safely dead, must have opened the pipe."

And so it proved, for in a wonderfully short space of time the water was gone save only a few pools upon the ground. Sir Michael dragged the body of Miguel and left it face upward, staring at the trapdoor.

"Now will they come to seek us. Fling yourself upon your face, Harry, and do not move. I will do the same; for when they see Miguel lying dead below the trapdoor, they will descend. See, the light of the torch returns!"

This was followed by the jingling of a chain unwound, and the harsh creaking of wood.

"That will do. Down with you, José. Take the lantern."

Through the trapdoor the man's figure appeared, the chain to which he

clung lengthening noisily as the windlass was turned in the chamber above.

And now a yellow light lit up the walls of the dungeon as José swung it round. Sir Michael watched through his half-closed eyelids, his huge limbs outflung in simulated death.

"What do you see?" shouted Dom Sebastian impatiently.

"Aye, lord, there are three of them. Here is Miguel, with his head shattered."

"He earned his fate; he was ever a drunkard! Take warning by him, José. But what of the other prisoners?"

José approached Sir Michael, and kicked him heavily.

"They lie like starfish stranded in the bay."

"Good! Well, we will begin with Miguel. I must work the windlass instead of him! Are you ready?"

José dragged the body closer, and attached it to the hook of the chain by ropes, then he gave the word to haul, and the ghastly burden swung slowly up into the air.

José stood below looking after it, and saw nothing and heard nothing but the creaking of the windlass and the chain, until a huge hand was clapped over his mouth and he was flung, broken-necked, to the ground. No sound of the struggle below could reach Dom Sebastian as he labored at the windlass, and when the chain dropped for the second time, Harry Wentworth was ready to attach Sir Michael to it, and this he did as quickly as possible lest Dom Sebastian should leave the windlass and look down.

Now Michael swung clear of the trapdoor, and Dom Sebastian bent over him to loose the rope. At first his fingers moved carelessly at the knots, and then suddenly Michael felt the muscles of the great Portuguese grow tense, and he knew that the warmth of his flesh had betrayed him. Dom Sebastian sprang back, and, as he sprang, plucked forth his dagger. Michael, still tied by the rope about his body, ran in on him as a bear runs in upon the hound that baits him.

The chamber was a vaulted place, and the flaring torch dimly lit the scene. Michael clutched at the wrist of the Portuguese, the wrist of the hand which held the dagger. Dom Sebastian bounded back, but as he did so his shod heels struck upon the body of Miguel and he fell. Sir Michael strained to get at him, but the rope held him. He clawed at the knot with bleeding fingers, but the knot was wet with water, and tight with the lifting of his mighty bulk, so Dom Sebastian rose free, and was once more upon his feet.

Then the fury that was in Sir Michael mounted to madness. With one vast effort tearing the windlass from its clamps, he leaped after his foe. Dom Sebastian made for the huge iron-bound door. He had reached the steps that led to it, but as his hand was outstretched to seize the latch, the fist of Michael smote him between the shoulders. His body gave beneath the blow, and he struck the door headfirst, diving at it as a man who flings himself into the sea.

It chanced that there was a mailed cap upon his head, and this was forced down over his ears and eyes, and the spike that surmounted it was driven into the wood of the door, so that his knees were upon the lowest step and his head nailed to the door, when Michael sprang upon his shoulders. And that was the end of Dom Sebastian.

"It would have been better had you stayed to face me!" jeered Sir Michael; then he stood above the trapdoor and called; "All goes well, Harry; Dom Sebastian will trouble us no more. Now take the clothes of José, and I will draw you up."

Afterward, with his comrade's help, he freed the body of Dom Sebastian

and put upon himself the garb of the Portuguese knight, even to the battered helmet. Then he threw the body into the dungeon, and went forth boldly into the castle, for it was yet night, and he knew his broad frame might pass for that of the lord of Tartarro.

The men at arms who stood sentinel saw the knight and his companion, but doubtless they were not unused to the nightly peregrinations of their master, for none questioned Sir Michael or his follower—who carried a box upon his shoulders, by which his face was screened—and presently they made their way forth from the castle.

A month later Michael and Harry stood upon the deck of a ship watching the dark walls of the castle of Tartarro sink slowly away as they made the open sea.

"That is the flag of the King of Portugal that rises on Tartarro now," said Harry, "for Dom Sebastian left no heir."

"It is time we opened the letter of his majesty, the King of Portugal," said Harry.

Michael cut the seals. "He grants to you the castle of Tartarro," said Harry, "and the rank of count within the kingdom of Portugal."

"Yet," said Michael, "not willingly will I visit my property, nor sleep within its walls, for surely I think strange ghosts must wail about it, when the west wind blows, and the Atlantic seaweed waves over the bones of the other prisoners of Dom Sebastian."

Other stories of escapes from grim prisons appeared in the issues of the POPULAR MAGAZINE dated: September 1, 1913; October 15, 1913; December 1, 1913; and April 1, 1914.

WHEN SCANLON SANG THE SONGS

WHEN W. J. Scanlon was in the show business, he invaded Washington on one occasion with a brand-new comic opera. In order to give the piece a fine send-off, he formulated the plan of sending free tickets for boxes to the president, the cabinet members, and other men high in official life.

"That won't do," one of his newspaper friends told him. "Too common. Do something picturesque. Why don't you go after Mr. Wu, the Chinese minister? If you get him, he will bring down a lot of other diplomatic people."

Scanlon fell for the proposition, and called at the Chinese legation.

"What sort of a show is this?" asked Wu.

"It's a comic opera," replied Scanlon.

"Any good jokes in it?"

Scanlon said it was full of good jokes.

"Tell me some of them," commanded Wu.

Scanlon did so, and Wu got such a series of laughs out of them that he sent for his whole establishment, numbering thirty-two people, and made the embarrassed Scanlon tell them all over again.

"Now," continued Wu, "are there any good songs in this show?"

"The show had so many good songs," declared Scanlon, "that we had to throw some of them away."

"All right," said Wu. "Sing me some of the best."

"I sang them," said Scanlon, telling the story afterward. "But that wasn't so remarkable. I had to sing 'em. There were thirty-two Chinamen to make me sing 'em. The amazing part of the thing was that all thirty-two of them came to see the show that night."

A Chat With You

THE newspapers, especially their news columns, are a great deal better than they used to be. Time was when many a reporter was admired for his ability to fake a story. Out of a meager entry on a police blotter telephoned to police headquarters, he could weave a beautiful little romance with tears in it for those who had them to shed and heart throbs for palpitating hearts. Were a child run over by a truck, the reporter could describe the incident as he thought it should have happened in the artistic fitness of things. It was the child's birthday, and he had received a wagon for a present, or the child was running across the street to meet his home-coming father when the truck hit him. Were a girl arrested for shoplifting, she was invariably described as being of the most ravishing beauty; if she ran off and married a man without her father's consent she immediately became an heiress and prominent socially. Moving as these circumstances may be when recounted for the first time they pall with repetition. The man who believed everything he saw in print had as a cardinal article of faith the belief that only beautiful girls got into trouble, that only heiresses declined to be married in church with all parents present, and that if a child met with an accident it was always on his birthday. Comforting as a religion of this sort may be, it has seemed to a newer generation of editors that if a Kipling or a De Maupassant must go to life itself for details and color and human interest, it is better for the average newspaper man to follow in their steps. You'll find both sorts of work in the papers to-day, but we are sure that the man who sees the people, and hears them talk, and sets them down honestly as they are, rich or poor, gentle or simple, gets more true human emotion and real human interest than his fanciful brother back in the editorial rooms.

IN spite of the fact that we, in our time, have read some pretty strange fiction, we still believe the ancient saw that truth is the stranger. It is stranger, more interesting, more wonderful in that it is the product of no man's finite imagination, that it can present a more infinite variety than any mind can conceive. It is the reality, the verisimilitude, the truth *in* fiction that gives it its keenest thrill and interest, that makes the most potent appeal to the mind and emotion, that has made this magazine the most successful magazine of fiction published to-day.

THE natural question at this point is: "Why not transcribe faithfully the life of some one and call it a story, since the actual truth is so fascinating?" It has been tried. There are scores and scores of realistic novels, some of them good, many of them dull. And it is the dull, depressing quality that tells against them so heavily in the long run, and makes the natural man without literary affectation prefer the good romance. To write the really satisfactory story, the author must put something of himself in the work, he must sympathize in a large measure with his hero, and see with the hero's eyes, and it is well known that no man sees himself as he actually is. He must also pick out the stirring and significant part of a man's life and show it vividly. Too often the realist is too hampered by detail, and, as the saying is, you can't see the woods for the trees. The complete book-length novel, "A Ton of Gold," by Bertrand W. Sinclair, that opens the present number

of the magazine, is a good case in point. No one would pretend for a moment that the events narrated therein were everyday occurrences. But still they are the sort of things that do happen sometimes; the story, like all good stories, is founded somewhat on fact. And what is a great deal more important than this, the people in the story are true and real. They act like actual men and women, as you yourself might act under the same circumstances and in detail; in color and atmosphere the story has all the truth that the most literal person could desire. The same may be said with equal force of Peter B. Kyne's new novel, which will open the next number of the magazine, out two weeks from to-day. It is called "The Man Behind," and is undoubtedly the best long story that Kyne has ever written. It is the story of a shyster lawyer, brilliant, square according to his own code, but ne'er do well, who finds the right woman and the right opportunity at the same time. Instead of helping crooks, the lawyer finds himself fighting them. All the thrilling struggles do not happen in the open. The courtroom fights in this story are every bit as thrilling and stirring in their appeal, although the weapons are quick wits and alertness. We never read a story before like this new novel by Kyne. We don't know any one else who could have written it. You are sure to like it.

WITH the present issue you have the first in the new series of college stories by Holworthy Hall. You are sure to have made the acquaintance of McHenry before you turned to these pages, and sure to have liked him. In the next issue, out two weeks from to-day, another new series has its inception. These stories are by Wells Hastings, some of whose stories you have already read and remember. The first of the new series is called "The Dancing Master." This dancing master is a creation. He is master indeed of the tango, the maxixe, the furlana, but more than this he is master of himself and of a good many of those with whom he comes in contact. He is a soldier of fortune, a gentleman by profession, an adventurer, an athlete. Although he can make a princely revenue out of his fashionable dance hall, he is not satisfied in the least with this. Not without honor and honesty, not without scruples, he still is possessed and governed by a spirit of daring and adventure that makes his life a succession of thrilling intrigues. These new stories are no saccharine tales of the dancing salon, but red-blooded stories of adventure. Whether you, like many another good man, have been caught by the present craze, or whether you prefer to sit on the back stairs while the others are dancing in the parlor, you are sure to like these stories.

IN the next issue there's a splendid circus story by Charles E. Van Loan, there's a baseball story by Foxhall Williams, a business story by George Randolph Chester, and a railroad story by Frank L. Packard. There's another story in the series of tales by Richard Washburn Child. There's the biggest and best installment yet in Oppenheim's four-part story, "Missing," and there's the second, most exciting half of Scutt's two-part story "Kings of the Mighty." This isn't all, by any means, but surely it is enough to show you that it's some magazine, and that you'd better order your copy in advance.

Valeska Suratt

Making the Hair Grow, and Other Beauty Secrets

Individualism and Simplicity in Methods of Beauty-Making, Are Strongly Exemplified in the Following Article, by the Foremost Living, Self-Made Beauty of the American Stage, Miss Valeska Suratt. In Characteristic Vein, She Explains the Methods Which Have Produced for Her the Loveliness Which Has Brought Her Fame.

By Miss Valeska Suratt.

MAKING the hair grow was for a long time as great a problem to me, as it is today to thousands of women. There were days when thick hair would come out on comb or brush, and I feared baldness would soon result. After long experimenting, I came to two inevitable conclusions—the hair must have nourishment to keep it in good condition, and the hair roots must be allowed to breathe. Dirt and scurf accumulate on the scalp and no soap can remove it. Dandruff results, the hair becomes starved, looks lifeless and begins to fall out. I came to the conclusion then that the hair needs two things, a shampoo that is not a soap, but a remover of scurf, dandruff and dirt, and a tonic that will strengthen the roots, stop the hair falling and *force* the hair to grow.

For the shampoo I have found that a teaspoonful of eggol dissolved in a cup of hot water makes the cheapest and best cleanser. It will remove every particle of dirt and scurf, and leave the hair soft and fluffy and easy to do up. I usually shampoo at least twice a month. Twenty-five cents' worth of eggol is enough for a dozen delightful shampoos.

Now for my hair-growing formula: Mix half a pint of alcohol with half a pint of water and add one ounce of beta-quinol (if you prefer use a pint of bay rum instead of the alcohol and water), apply this freely to the scalp, after brushing it generously for a few minutes; rub thoroughly with the finger tips. The beta-quinol will cost you about fifty cents at the drug store and this will make a full pint of the best hair tonic it is possible to make.

As for wrinkles, I used to look upon them much as the drying of an apple skin foretells inevitably the passing of youth that can never again return. Since I have worked out for myself the problem of ridding myself of these check-marks of Nature's bookkeeper, I have changed my mind. Like a splash of a pebble in a pond, the face of the water is ruffled, many ripples widen toward the shore and disappear and the water reflects the sun and the blue sky again as before, it was just a splash, nothing more. My dear readers, there is little excuse now for the presence of wrinkles. The results of this formula have indeed proved this to be the case. Every woman should try this formula, use it freely, and then your face will reflect again the sunshine of youth, and every wrinkle will be just a vanishing ripple, nothing more. In a large bowl pour half a pint of hot water; place bowl in a pan of hot water on a slow fire; add slowly two ounces of eptol and stir constantly until it begins to cream; remove from fire and add a tablespoonful of glycerine, stirring until cold. This will give you a large quantity of fine, white, satiny cream. This will not grow hair. Enough eptol to make the above formula will cost you about fifty cents at any first class drug or department store.

The complexion may be quickly beautified. A lady once said to me, "I'm sick and tired of trying to beautify my face and arms. I have used about everything this side of the pearly gates and I still haven't a complexion to be proud of." This is the sentiment felt by thousands of women everywhere, and the question is asked, "Is there anything which will actually and in a short time produce the rose-like complexions we see in beautifully colored photographs?" Upon one of my trips through the South, I met a lady who had the most beautiful, peach bloom, velvety complexion I ever saw and she gave me a formula for a cream. I made up some and used it liberally, the results were remarkable. Here it is: Bring a pint of water to the boiling point; add, slowly, one ounce of zintone; stir constantly until all is dissolved; then add two tablespoonfuls of glycerine. Fifty cents' worth of zintone will make a pint of this excellent beauty cream.

For superfluous hair there is nothing which will remove it so perfectly, so magically as simple sulfo solution. It simply dissolves the hair instead of burning it off like pastes and powders, and never irritates, reddens or injures the skin. It can be used on the tenderest skin and no matter how stiff or soft the hair growth. Many women have "down" on their faces and arms. Removed with this simple solution, the difference in appearance will be startling. Druggists charge one dollar an ounce for sulfo solution, and it is certainly worth it.

Blackheads, big and little, should be removed without pinching and squeezing, as this reddens and spots the skin. Get some powdered neroxin from your druggist. Fifty cents' worth will be all you will need. Sprinkle a little on a hot, wet sponge and rub briskly for a minute or two over the blackheads. You'll be surprised how they will disappear in a few moments.

The face-powder and perfume are the finishing touches to every woman's toilet. I have tried so many kinds of powder with such poor satisfaction that I finally worked out a formula of my own and it is now sold in most department and drug stores as the Valeska Suratt Face Powder, at 50 cents for an extra large box in flesh or white. The Valeska Suratt Perfume is sold in cut glass stoppered bottles only (never in bulk), at $1.00 per bottle.

Every article mentioned in my formulas can be found in most first-class drug stores. If you are not convenient to one, or if your druggist should not have the article you want, my secretary will mail you the article, postpaid, if you enclose the price to me. Simply address your letter, Valeska Suratt, 370 Thompson Bldg., Chicago, Ill. Kindly mark your letter, "For Secretary."

Ships Carry Anchors in Fair Weather

And Thoughtful Men Carry Accident Insurance Because Accidents Happen When Least Expected

OUT of thirty men who lost their lives in a recent fire in a western city, five or one-sixth of the total number carried accident insurance in **The Travelers,** under which the Company will pay the beneficiaries **forty-eight thousand dollars.** The cost of these five policies was $95.00.

This protection is furnished at an annual expense per thousand of less than **two cents per day** by a company which has been writing accident insurance for over fifty years and has paid accident benefits to over 632,000 policyholders.

If you are not carrying an accident policy, apply for one today in the largest accident insurance company in the world.

It will be too late when the need strikes home.

Travelers accident policies are famous for their broad coverage, fair spirit of adjustment and prompt payment.

Moral: Insure in The Travelers

The TRAVELERS INSURANCE CO., Hartford, Conn. *Popular C.* **TEAR OFF**

Please send me particulars regarding your accident policies
My name, address, occupation and date of birth are written below :

America's Telephones Lead the World Service Best—Cost Lowest

from London "Daily Mail"

Why is it that Government ownership and management of the telephones is practically always a failure?

Why is it that throughout the length and breadth of Great Britain and the Continent hardly a single efficient long-distance service is to be found? Why is it that in New York one ...

from "Electrical Industries" (London)

THERE is a certain amount of satisfaction in the fact that Mr. Winston Churchill got so angry over the freaks of the telephone the other day that he flung his receiver on the floor. As a member of the Government which purchased the telephone system, he deserves all the torture that Post Office working can inflict. But his rage, ... delicat... which ... doubtless ...

From "Le Petit Phare de Nantes," Paris

"But today I found I had to talk with Saint-Malo, and, wishing to be put through quickly, I had my name inscribed on the waiting list first thing in the morning; the operator told me—though very amiably, I must confess—that I would have to wait thirteen hours and ten minutes (you are reading it right) in order to be put through."

Herr Haberland, Deputy, in the Reichstag

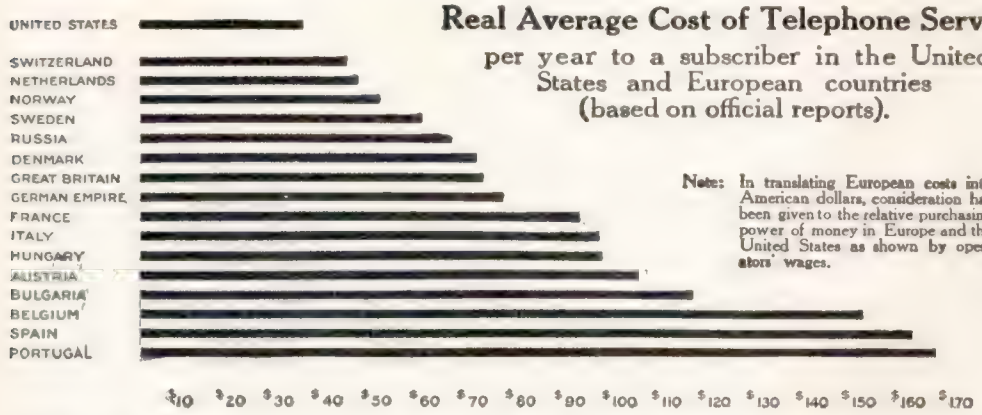
"The average time required to get a connection with Berlin is now 1½ hours. Our business life and trade suffer considerably on account of this lack of telephone facilities, which exists not only between Dusseldorf and Berlin and between Berlin and the West, but also between other towns, such as Strassburg, Antwerp, etc."

Herr Wendel, in The German Diet.

"I refer here to Freiberg. There the entire telephone service is interrupted at 9 o'clock p. m. Five minutes after 9 o'clock it is impossible to obtain a telephone connection."

Dr. R. Luther, in the Dresdner Anzeiger

"In the year 1913, 36 years after the discovery of the electro-magnetic telephone, in the age of the beginning of wireless telegraphy, one of the largest cities of Germany, Dresden, with half a million inhabitants, is without adequate telephone facilities."



Real Average Cost of Telephone Service

per year to a subscriber in the United States and European countries (based on official reports).

Note: In translating European costs into American dollars, consideration has been given to the relative purchasing power of money in Europe and the United States as shown by operators' wages.

These are the reasons why there are twelve times as many telephones for each hundred persons in the United States as in Europe.

AMERICAN TELEPHONE AND TELEGRAPH COMPANY
AND ASSOCIATED COMPANIES

One Policy ***One System*** ***Universal Service***

THE PLEASANT BITS OF LIFE

A bit of fine weather . . . a bit of a stroll in the Champs Elysees . . . a bit of love-making, of leisure, of lightheartedness. Above all, a bit of a cigarette, hand-rolled, in the paper Riz La Croix.

These are but bits of life and laughter . . . but, *ma foi*, what a pleasant life it is! Life in a spangle of sunshine . . . *quelle vie, mes enfants!*

RIZ LA ✠.

(Pronounced: REE-LAH-KROY)

FAMOUS CIGARETTE PAPERS

are to be seen everywhere in the sunshine moments of happy days. They are the light little, tight little wrappers in which the epicure of life rolls his golden grains of joy, through which he puffs his aromatic cloudlets of content.

One hundred and fifty million books of such papers every year thus give up their earthly existence to aid men's dreams of paradise.

Riz La Croix bring pleasure, because:

They are strong.

They are adhesive. Made from flax-born linen, the edges adhere.

They are light and thin. When they burn, no paper odor mingles with the fragrance of your tobacco.

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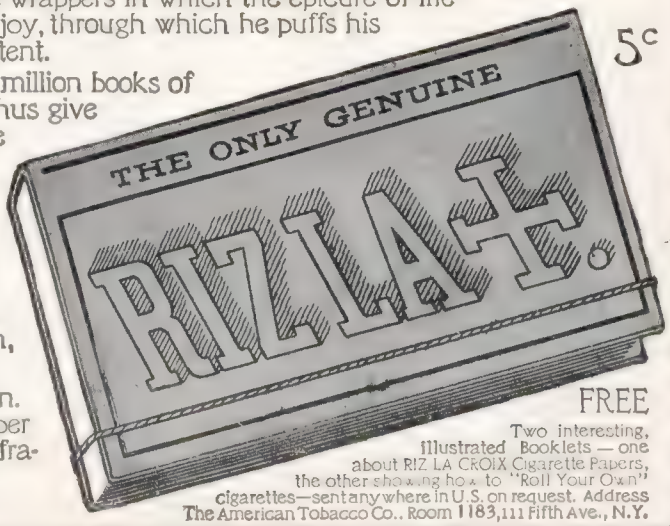

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Two interesting, illustrated Booklets — one about RIZ LA CROIX Cigarette Papers, the other showing how to "Roll Your Own" cigarettes—sent anywhere in U.S. on request. Address The American Tobacco Co., Room 1183, 111 Fifth Ave., N.Y.

Go over in the corner

and have a good half hour's talk with yourself

Where will you be next year? You have your mind set on a better job, haven't you? You want to earn more money, don't you? You feel that you ought to make more of yourself and that NOW is the time to start. Right so far, isn't it?

Well, what are you going to do about it? Just "wishing" won't get you anywhere. Do you know enough? Have you had the **training** that the bigger job requires? Be honest with yourself. Look the situation squarely in the face. Your whole future depends upon the way you answer those questions now.

If you are willing to admit that the job you want requires a big man, a well-informed man, a **well-trained** man, why not let the International Correspondence Schools qualify you for the job?

Every month 400 men of all ages and occupations report advancement in position and salary wholly due to I. C. S. training.

These men stopped "wishing" and **acted.** They marked the coupon.

Mark the Coupon

No matter how little you earn and regardless of your present situation or previous lack of opportunity, the I. C. S. can help you. **Mark the coupon to-day.**

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Box 855 SCRANTON, PA.
Explain, without further obligation on my part, how I can qualify for the position before which I mark X

Salesmanship	Civil Service
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Telephone Expert	Show Card Writing
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Structural Engineer	Industrial Designing
Concrete Construction	Commercial Law
Mechan. Engineer	Automobile Running
Mechanical Draftsman	Teacher
Refrigeration Engineer	English Branches
Civil Engineer	Good English for Every One
Surveyor	Agriculture
Mine Superintendent	Poultry Farming
Metal Mining	Plumbing & Steam Fitting
Locomotive Fireman & Eng.	Sheet Metal Worker
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John Tremaine

the splendid novel by

MARIE VAN VORST

Another of the fascinating STORIES OF THE SUPER-WOMEN, by

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A complete novelette and many short stories by such authors as

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This Catalogue of Summer Styles Is Free!

BE SURE TO WRITE FOR A COPY TODAY

The styles for this summer are altogether changed, and if you wish your summer wardrobe to be in the latest style, don't fail to send for our handsome Fashion Catalogue. It contains 257 pages of beautiful illustrations showing all the changes in style that have taken place, and it will give you a perfect idea of just what fashionable New York women are wearing. Don't put it off. Sit right down and drop us a postal card. Ask for our **FREE Fashion Catalogue No. 62R,** and we will send it to you **FREE** by return mail. Remember we pay all Mail or Express Charges on anything you order from us, and we guarantee to satisfy you or immediately refund your money.

4R74—**Dainty Dress** of cool stylish Dresden Flowered Crepe. The waist is made in full blouse style with short kimona sleeves and has turndown collar and cuffs of plain crepe to match color of flower in goods. Neck is cut in a V, and front of waist is in surplice style trimmed with piping and self-covered buttons. The girdle is of plain crepe to match collar. Skirt has a panel effect down front, and from a short distance below hips is a gathered ruffle extending around back of skirt, giving a stylish tunic effect. Ruffle is joined to skirt by colored piping. Dress fastens in front. Comes in white ground, figures in rose, lavender or Copenhagen blue trimmed to match. Sizes 32 to 44 bust, skirt length 40 inches. **Price, Mail or Express Charges Paid By Us** **$1.75**

35R76—**Charming Summer Outfit** consisting of a stylish Frock and a chic Silk Coat to match. Dress is made of a beautiful embroidered Crepe, with loose blouse waist, embroidered in all-over design in contrasting color. The vest in front and the chic puffs which finish the three-quarter sleeves are of Brussels net. Around the neck and down front is a dainty Japanese collar of Oriental lace. The crushed girdle is of Taffeta Silk. Hanging free over the skirt is a deep graduated tunic, finished with a double Minaret ruffle. Lower part of skirt is of plain Crepe and has a stitched plait down center of front and back. Dress fastens in front. The Coat, of fine quality Chiffon Taffeta, is made loose and full with short kimono sleeves, and a rolling Japanese collar of self material. Bottom of model is finished with a gathered ruffle as pictured. Coat is unlined and fastens with a dainty loop and frog. Colors of Dress, white with floral embroidery in Copenhagen blue with Copenhagen blue girdle and Copenhagen jacket to match; also in white with violet embroidery, violet girdle and coat. Sizes 32 to 44 bust, skirt length 40 inches; also to fit small women 32 to 38 bust, skirt length 38 inches. **Price for Silk Jacket and Dress Complete, Mail or Express Charges Paid By Us** **$9.95**

If sold separately **Dress 35R76A, $6.98**
Coat 35R76B, $3.98

35R78—**Dress** described under 35R76, also comes in solid colors: Copenhagen blue with black girdle, violet with black girdle, both with self-color embroidery. Please note that while the Silk Coat described comes in the same colors as dress 35R78 we cannot guarantee that the shades will match exactly. **Price for Dress, Mail or Express Charges Paid By Us** **$5.98**

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WASHINGTON, MORTON & BARROW STS.
NEW YORK CITY, N.Y.

WE SATISFY YOU OR REFUND YOUR MONEY

ARROW
Silk SHIRTS

Exquisite colors and patterns in durable washable silks

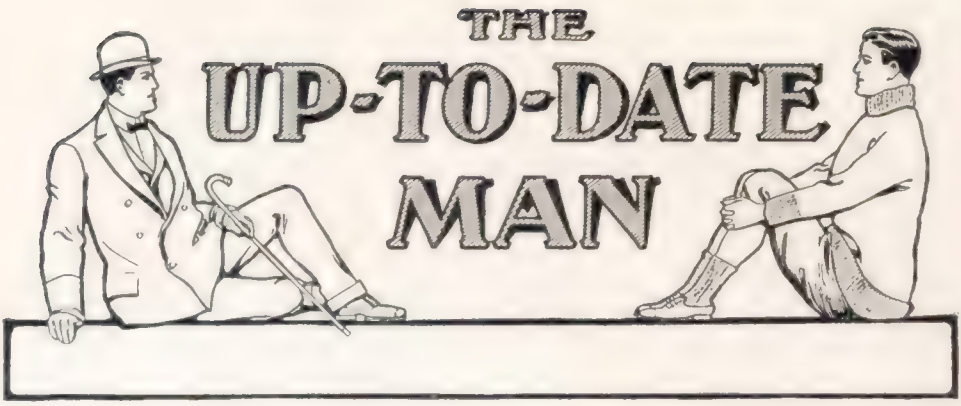
$3.00 to $10.00

ARROW COLLARS

"STANDISH" smartly expresses the best in summer collar styles

2 for 25¢

Cluett Peabody & Co., Inc., Makers, Troy, N.Y.



The readers of the magazine may write to this department about any problem of dress. Every question will be promptly answered, provided that a stamped, self-addressed envelope is enclosed.

IN harmony with the general trend of men's dress this summer toward the accentuation of youth and slimness, the fashionable "sennit" and "split" straw hats are made with tallish, tapering crowns and narrowish brims. "Sennit" is the name of the rough weaves, while the fine-braided weaves are called "split." A modish "sennit" is pictured in the accompanying sketch.

High crowns seem to add to your inches, producing the effect of lengthening you out and tapering you off. Narrowish brims go well with the trim shoulders of summer coats and the snug drape of trousers.

For those who prefer the softer straws there are Bangkoks, Leghorns, and panamas. A "smart" panama is illustrated this month. This hat never wanes in vogue, and notwithstanding all the whims and windings of style, it is still "the aristocrat of straws."

This season there is a furore among young men for fancy "puggaree," or pleated hatbands. One sees them in Scotch plaids, Roman stripes, polka dots, college stripes, and scores of other patterns. Sometimes four-in-hands and hat ribbons are worn to match, and for this purpose polka dots are notably in favor.

The Always "Smart" Panama

In derbies, the "smartest" shape that known as the "taper oval crown," a crown that tapers gradually and gracefully toward the top, and has a medium roll brim. The excessively

Sears, Roebuck and Co.'s
Masterpiece of Value

THE HARRIS
VISIBLE TYPEWRITER

The Harris Visible Typewriter is beyond question the greatest merchandising victory we have ever won. $39.80

The Harris is standard in size and shape—is equipped with Universal keyboard, two sets of shift keys, shift lock, release key, tabulator, back spacer, marginal release, 11-inch carriage, writes a line 9 inches long.

Hundreds of Harris Visible Typewriters have replaced other standard makes throughout our plants.

At $39.80 we believe it is the greatest typewriter value in America.

Compare it with any other make, regardless of price, and judge the value we are offering.

Write today, requesting Typewriter Catalog No. 89P92 which describes every detail and quotes liberal time payment terms.

Sears, Roebuck and Co., Chicago

We will gladly send you a Harris for 30-day trial and return your money if you are not satisfied with your purchase.

flat-crown, flat-brim derby, worn pulled down over the ears, is out of fashion.

In soft hats, too, the tapering or conical or "pyramid" crown is the favorite. Young men are very indulgent to the French bow, which is placed in a three-quarter position toward the back of the band. This bow looks like a hand-tied scarf, and has soft, flowing

High-Crown English Sennit Straw.

ends, instead of being flat and seeming to be gummed on.

Among the season's commanding colors in soft hats are blue, green, brown, steel, and pearl. Ribbons come either to match or contrasting, as light green upon dark, and the like.

The widespread popularity of the loose, baggy-boxy "Balmacaan" top-

The Joke—He Never Thought of B. V. D.

FANNING, mopping and grimacing, "Phew! how hot," *won't* keep you cool, when the sun grills. B. V. D. *will*. It lifts a burden from your body and weight from your mind. You forget the heat, because you're too busy "enjoying life"—lounging, dancing, a game of golf, a bout at tennis, watching a baseball game. Get into B. V. D. and *look* and *feel* cool.

For your own welfare, fix the B.V.D. Red Woven Label in your mind and make the salesman *show* it to you. If he can't or won't, *walk out!* On every B. V. D. Undergarment is sewed

This Red Woven Label

MADE FOR THE
B.V.D.
BEST RETAIL TRADE

(Trade Mark Reg. U. S. Pat. Off. and Foreign Countries)

B. V. D. Coat Cut Undershirts and Knee Length Drawers, 50c, 75c, $1.00 and $1.50 the Garment.

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The B. V. D. Company,
New York.

London Selling Agency: 66, Aldermanbury, E. C.

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The New ARROW 1914 Model

New Motorcycle Type

Remarkable new improvements make the 1914 "Arrow" a positive wonder for speed, comfort and easy riding. Makes bicycle riding like coasting all the way. The smartest looking bicycle ever built. Latest Eagle easy motorcycle saddle—new Departure coaster brake—special motorcycle pedals—motorcycle handlebars with long rubber grips—imported anti-friction chain—reinforced frame—beautiful finish. All sizes for boys, men, and women. Don't fail to learn about this great new motorcycle model.

Wonderful Offer

Write today for the low direct offer we are making on the splendid Arrow Bicycle. Get our free catalogs. For only a very, very small amount down we will ship direct to you the elegant Arrow, built to last a life time. Pay for it while you ride—a little each month. Enjoy the pleasure of the bicycle while paying.

Write Today! Right now, and we will send you the announcement of this remarkable new motorcycle type "Arrow," with full details of machine and astonishing bed rock direct offer. Send a postal now with your name and address. TODAY SURE.

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If you want an ideal lamp for night fishing, trapping, hunting or for work about farm or machinery, send to-day for a

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Projects a 14 candle power light 150 feet. Burns Acetylene Gas. Weight 6 oz. Height 3¼ in. Can be carried in hand or worn on cap or belt, leaving both hands free. No oil, soot or glass. Absolutely safe and simple. Fifty hours bright light costs 25c. Useful as well during Automobile repairing. Catalogue free and instructive booklet, "Knots and How to Tie Them" mailed on request.

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Here's Real Pleasure

Escape the heat and monotony of these long, languid days by an outing, vacation or exploring trip in an

"Old Town Canoe"

It will open a world of new summertime pleasures to you. The "Old Town" is strong and safe, swift and graceful—preferred by experienced canoeists. 2000 canoes in stock—agents everywhere—send for catalog.

"Where the stream in witchin' play
Goes laughin' on, jest pushin' all the
lilies out his way."

OLD TOWN CANOE CO.
136 MAIN STREET,
OLD TOWN, MAINE,
U. S. A.

coat, with kimono sleeves, has given a spurt to the wearing of "Balmacaan" cloth hats cut from homespuns and tweeds.

These novelty hats, for which young men are darting eagerly, are made with welted crowns and drooping brims in such shades as pepper-and-salt, moss-green, sage-brown, pheasant, chocolate, and seal.

The newest golf "brogan boots" have "kiltie" tongues of slashed leather which trail over the instep. These lend a picturesque touch to one's "knickers" and wool stockings, and stress the "Scotchiness" of the whole "rig."

Among the "custom" shirtings most countenanced for summer are soft crapes, self-figures, Jacquard and fancy striped silks, Scotch madras, satin "broches," and cricket flannels.

Men's suits used to be tailored with sailor-broad shoulders and "armor-plate" stiffness, but these are out of fashion, because they are out of reason. "Look natural!" is the admonition of present-day fashion, and "don't try to seem what you are not."

Hence, all men's clothes for summer are tailored with the utmost softness, so that they will conform easily and normally to the hills and hollows of the figure, and will "look natural," instead of affected and artificial.

Coat lapels are soft and rolling, instead of pressed flat, and coat fronts are not padded with stiffening and canvas, but left free and flowing. If they show wrinkles, all the better, if "they wrinkle in the right place," as the tailors say.

BEAUNASH.

Not a Fear-frozen Throat

Aims Easy As Pointing Your Finger

A NOISE—wide awake—dead of night—all alone. She reaches for her ten-shot Savage. *Now* she is guarded—safe.

The burglar hears a calm, confident voice, sees the glistening black barrel pointed straight as the finger of death. He knows she has at her finger tips ten shots, which she can place, one to a trigger pull, just where she wants them. He shakes with fear—he *gets out.*

Some day—if you don't get her a Savage—some day she will have to appeal to the burglar for mercy. You know what "mercy" from a depraved criminal means. Get a Savage *today.* Show her how it aims easy as pointing her finger; how she can shoot once for each trigger pull; how she can tell at a glance or a touch if it is loaded.

The only automatic that guards her against the old excuse "didn't know it was loaded." Show her that two extra shots in the Savage get her 25% more protection.

Made in .32 caliber and .380 caliber. Send today for free booklet "If You Hear a Burglar"—written by a famous detective.

FAMOUS SAVAGE RIFLES

OUR handsome free rifle catalogue shows and describes the latest Savage rifles, including new 20-shot repeater; 22 cal. 20 in. barrel; military bolt action; weight 4 lbs. Price, $6.50. Savage Arms Company, 946 Savage Avenue, Utica, New York.

THE NEW SAVAGE AUTOMATIC

Shirley President Suspenders

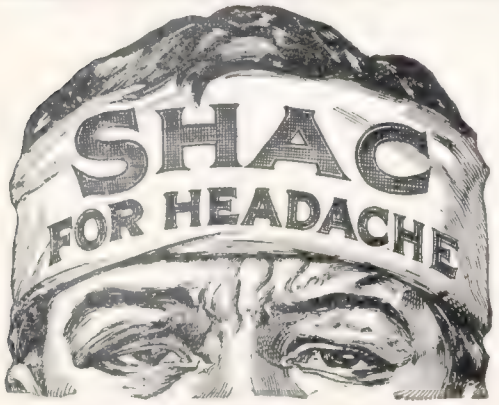
Light as down on tender shoulders

50¢

"Satisfaction or money back"

Be sure "SHIRLEY PRESIDENT" is on buckles

The C. A. Edgarton Mfg. Co., Shirley, Mass.



25 years on the market. Sold by all druggists wherever heads ache. Twelve wafers for 25 cents—or send 10 cents for trial sample—three doses.

The Zymole Co., 108 John St., New York

Your Money's Worth Plus 75 to 100% UNREDEEMED PLEDGES

PERFECT CUT GENUINE DIAMONDS

ELGIN WALTHAM ALL RELIABLE MAKE WATCHES

EXAMINE FIRST—If Satisfied, Buy—If Not, Return. We Ship, With Privilege of Examination.

The *biggest value for your money*—We have thousands of unredeemed pledges on which we can positively save you as much and more than half of price asked by dealers, or wholesalers. Don't make a purchase of this kind until you get our big illustrated Bargain Bulletin.

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Match These Values If You Can

No. 250707. Nine magnificent diamonds set in platinum, having appearance of 2¼ kt. solitaire. Try to match at $75. Guaranteed loan $28. *Unredeemed Price,* **$36.55**

No. 251278. Genuine 21-jeweled unredeemed Crescent St. Waltham Railroad Watch in high grade serviceable case. Guaranteed to pass railroad inspection. Protected price on movement alone $35. *Unredeemed Pr.* **$17.95**

Over 60 Years in Same Location is proof of Absolute Square Dealing—upright and honest intentions. Every protection afforded. RATED AT OVER THREE QUARTERS OF A MILLION DOLLARS.

Money Back Guarantee We pay expressage and run all risk of pleasing you in the examination. Your money back if unsatisfactory to you, though always exactly as represented. We guarantee LOAN VALUES. We guarantee to take back any diamond at full price in exchange.

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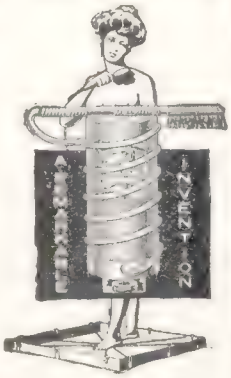
GET YOUR NAME ON OUR LIST

$1200
IN COLD CASH

Made, Paid, Banked in 30 Days by Stoneman—$15,000 To Date

Reader, this offer is open to **you**—this money—the cold cash—can be **yours.** You and you alone by waiting too long can lose it. Investigate today—**get the proof.** Send your name and address—but **NO MONEY**—this very minute.

$1000.00 PER MAN PER COUNTY



Don't worry—don't find excuses—no experience is necessary—business supplies the capital. You don't have to wait a month—not even a week—**payments can start the first day**—and continue daily up to $1000.00 per month per county. For years we have been **quietly picking men** from all walks of life, **ministers, clerks, farmers, preachers,** doctors, lawyers, teachers and so on—enabling them with our cooperation and **$50,000.00 appropriation** to get what we here offer and can do for you—$1000.00 per man, per county. Some of these men you may know—possibly have envied without understanding the reason of their prosperity

INVESTIGATE AND BE AMAZED

Demand absolute proof—accept no other kind. **Either we have the best thing that ever happened or we're colossal liars.** Ask Schleicher, **minister,** whether it's true that he received

$195 TWELVE HOURS AFTER APPOINTMENT

Langely, liveryman, $115 first day; Rasp, **agent,** $1685 in 73 days; Beem, **solicitor,** $164.25 weekly for 12 weeks; Korstad, **farmer,** $2212 in a few weeks; Zimmerman, **farmer,** $3856 in 30 days; Juell, **clerk,** $6800; Hart, **farmer,** $5000; Wilson, **cashier,** $3000 in 30 days. **Let us refer you** to these men, to the **U. S. Government,** to banks, business houses, noted people at home and abroad. Heed this caution from Chas. Starr, of Mich., who writes, "Sorry this field is closed. **Should have acted sooner** but was skeptical. Your local man's **great success** has set everybody talking and proves **I was a chump. Wonderful what a man can do with a real opportunity."** Then read this from Lodewick who acted quickly: **"Lucky I answered ad.** It's great. **Money coming fast."** Which will you be, Starr, a victim of **"neglected opportunities,"** or Lodewick, the "early bird." To escape Starr's fate, send your postal this very minute—

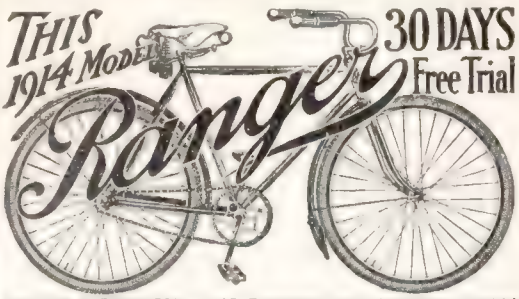
SPEND ONE CENT TO MAKE THOUSANDS

Strange invention startles world. Gives every home that long desired blessing a modern bathroom with hot and cold running water facilities for only $6.50. No plumbing—no water works—self heating. Only ten minutes to install. Gives cleansing plus friction, massage and shower baths in any room. Equivalent to any $200 bathroom. Over 200,000 delighted users. Used by U. S. Government.

More remarkable than this invention is our startling plan of universal distribution through special representatives who become virtually **profit sharing partners** in a business that's immense—exciting—fascinating—dignified—and above all, has enabled them, will enable you, to get $1000.00 per month, per county. **Asking to be shown doesn't obligate you one bit. Investigate today** by all means.

ALLEN MFG. CO.

3915 Allen Bldg., Toledo, O.



EXTRAORDINARY OFFER *—30 days* (one month's) free trial on this finest of bicycles—the ***"Rangor."*** We will ship it to you on approval, *freight prepaid,* without a cent deposit in advance. This offer is *genuine.*

WRITE TODAY for our big catalog showing our full line of bicycles for men and women, boys and girls at *prices never before equaled* for like quality. It is a cyclopedia of bicycles, sundries and useful bicycle information. **It's free.**

TIRES, COASTER-BRAKE rear wheels, inner tubes, lamps, cyclometers, equipment and parts for all bicycles at **half usual prices.** A limited number of second hand bicycles taken in trade by our retail stores will be closed out at once, at **$3** to **$8** each.

RIDER AGENTS wanted in each town and district to ride and exhibit a sample 1914 model ***Ranger*** furnished by us.

It Costs You Nothing to learn what we offer you and how we can do it. You will be astonished and convinced. **Do not buy** a bicycle, tires or sundries until you get our catalog and new low prices and marvelous offers. **Write today.**

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Safe as a life boat—Cannot warp or rot—No seams to calk—Cost but a coat of paint to keep in commission—**Guaranteed absolutely against puncture.** The easiest boat to row and to keep its course—Ideal for recreation or livery. Write for Catalog of Motor Boats, Row Boats, Hunting and Fishing Boats and Canoes. **FREE.**

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The World's Largest Boat Builders.

Cost Less - Last Longer than Wood Boats

WHITE VALLEY GEMS LOOK LIKE DIAMONDS

Stand acid and fire diamond test. So hard they easily scratch a file and **will cut glass.** Brilliancy guaranteed 25 years. Mounted in 14k solid gold diamond mountings. **See them before paying.** Will send you any style ring, pin or stud for examination—all charges prepaid. **No money in advance. Money refunded if not satisfactory.** Write today for free catalog.

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$60 PER HEN PER YEAR

SEND POST CARD TO-DAY for free 56 page booklet "The Why and How of The Miller System." Test our methods far enough to form an opinion. We want to prove to you, that you can make—under the scientific methods of THE MILLER SYSTEM—$20 to $60 per hen per year. Show our guarantee to your lawyer. Address,

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Considering the quality of the fiction it publishes, its size—224 pages—THE POPULAR MAGAZINE comes pretty close to being the best bargain the newsdealer has to offer.—*Houston Post.*

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FREE TRIAL

Stuart's PLAPAO-PADS are different from the truss, being medicine applicators made *Self-Adhesive* to prevent slipping, and the resultant chafing and shifting of the pad out of place and against the bone; they have, therefore, proven to be an important adjunct in retaining rupture that cannot be held by a truss.

No Straps, Buckles or Springs attached. *Soft as velvet—easy to apply—inexpensive.* Awarded Gold Medal, Rome; Grand Prix, Paris. Old and young have attested under oath that the *Plapao-Pads* cured their rupture—some of them most aggravated cases. No delay from work. Process of recovery is natural, so more apt to be permanent. We "show you" by sending Trial of Plapao absolutely *FREE.* Write for it today.

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$1500.00 MADE IN ONE MONTH

WITH A "LONG" CRISPETTE MACHINE

That's what Mr. Eakins made—paid his last $10 for rent of a store window—at the end of 30 days had $1500 in the bank—today he is independent. A Crispette machine and Crispettes did it.

BY THIS MAN

Mr. Perrin, Cal., took in $380 in one day—every nickel brought him almost 4c profit. What are you going to do in the future? Just barely earn a living—keep wishing for something to turn up? Don't do it.

LISTEN—take that money you have saved up against the day of opportunity—invest it in a Long Popcorn Crispette Machine, and make fortune smile on you—build up a big paying business. Think of the fortunes made of 5c pieces—street cars—moving picture shows—5 and 10c stores. Everyone will spend a nickel—everyone likes Crispettes—children—parents—old folks. You don't need any experience—you can start anywhere—in a store window, a small store room where rent is cheap, or the kitchen of your home. The Crispette machine and Long's secret formula to the man of limited means is a Gold Mine—a sure way to independence and fortune—to make money from the start.

ALMOST 400% PROFIT

Every 20c invested returns $1.00 cash—not theory—not guess work—not imagination, but the actual bona fide proven record of profits from Crispette machines from Coney Island to Ore.—from Canada to Argentine Republic.

STOP! You have followed the rut too long—received only what others cared to give. Get on the other side—take only what you want. F. C. Thompson, Ore., took in $575 in 27 days. E. H. H., Pa., sold over 12,000 rolls in two weeks—just records from letters from Crispette merchants in all parts of the country.

The money barons began with much less advantage than I offer you today. Write NOW for my handsomely illustrated 48 page free booklet, "How to Make Money in the Crispette Business," or

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It's unnecessary to write that you are coming—just drop in any time. I will pay your traveling expenses within a 300 mile radius if you buy a machine. I will give you reference after reference from responsible merchants, bankers, citizens—satisfy yourself and then go over the Crispette business with me.

I want to start you in the same business that made me wealthy.
W. Z. LONG.

Go Into This Business NOW—

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W. Z. LONG,
888 High St., Springfield, O.

W. Z. LONG
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Springfield, O.

Please send me free, full particulars about Crispette Machine and how to start a big paying business.

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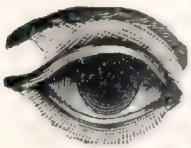
The Eye and Its Disease

Prof. Wilson's Treatise on Eye Diseases Should Be Read By Every Person With Impaired Eyesight. The Book Is Free.

EYEGLASSES NOT NECESSARY

Every reader afflicted with any impairment of eyesight should not fail to send for this book. It contains 64 pages and cover and describes in language so plain and interesting the various forms of diseases of the eye and sure and safe methods of treatment that any reader of ordinary intelligence may fully comprehend every word.



The author of this Book is the inventor of "Actina," an instrument that is attracting the attention of people in all parts of the world owing to the wonderful results obtained from its use.

In the treatment of Eye disease the author says: "Nine out of ten persons wearing glasses might better be without them. Eye Glasses Do Not Cure. The defects that make them necessary can be removed in most cases by proper treatment. There is also no need for cutting or drugging the Eye for most forms of disease—for the cause can be removed by a newer and more humane method."

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Thousands of large shippers and all Railroads need Traffic Experts who know how to **route shipments,** obtain **lowest rates, shortest mileage, quickest deliveries.** We teach you to do this work expertly—**in a short time, at small expense.** We teach you **at home,** during your spare moments. No previous training or advanced education needed.

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You can now quickly, easily learn, **in your own home,** to dance the **Tango, Argentine, Castle Walk, Hesitation Waltz, Dream Waltz,** and other popular new dances. The new book, **"The Modern Dances,"** by Caroline Walker, gives authentic, plain instructions, correct diagrams and beautiful illustrations, especially posed by experts. **Anyone can learn.**

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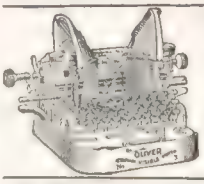

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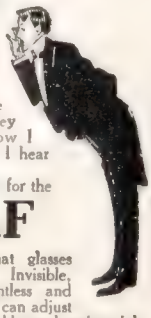

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is to the ears what glasses are to the eyes. Invisible, comfortable, weightless and harmless. Anyone can adjust it." Over one hundred thousand sold. Write for booklet and testimonials.

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Oh! George! It's a Beauty!

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to buy a rug or chair or table for that future home. We are importers and sell Diamonds direct, saving you jobber's and retailer's profits. **Certified Guarantee with every Diamond** guaranteeing weight and quality. We will send any Diamond or Watch in our Magnificent 25th Anniversary Art Catalog for your examination **without obligation or advance payment.** We also send free magnifying glass. Diamond investments pay 15% profits yearly in increased value. Note the remarkable values in two of our leaders shown herewith at $60 and $100. All transactions strictly confidential. Send for Catalog and Special World Beating Offer of **One Carat Diamond for only $125.** Write today—now.

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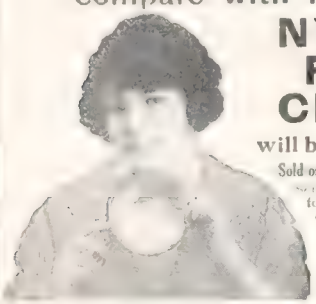

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is a millionaire, and the man in front, who sets out to "get" the other, is a police-court lawyer, a Dick Turpin of the law who ran rings around the penal code; but there was a straight streak in him and it meant his ultimate regeneration and his mighty battle with the man behind. **Peter B. Kyne** tells the tale in a book-length novel, complete in the month-end POPULAR.

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figures in a Harvard baseball comedy, with Pepper McHenry as the leading spirit of the play. **Holworthy Hall** is the author.

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and how he made $10,000 by one night's entertainment. This is the theme of **Wells Hastings'** clever story in

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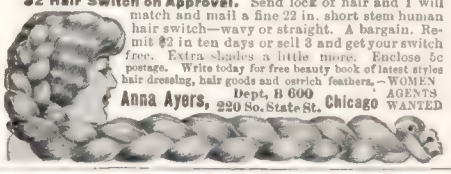

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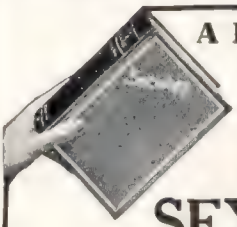

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Depends largely on a knowledge of the whole truth about self and sex and their relation to life and health. This knowledge does not come intelligently of itself, nor correctly from ordinary every day sources.

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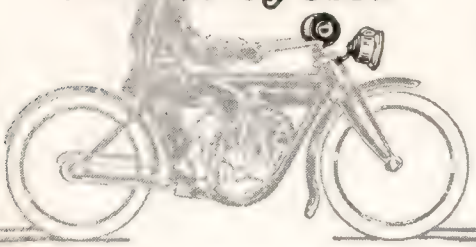

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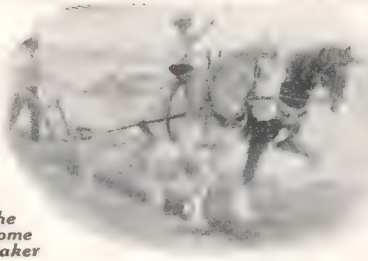

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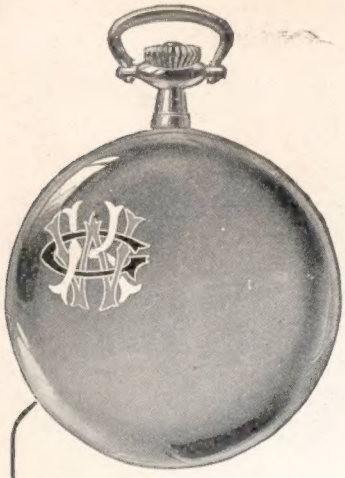

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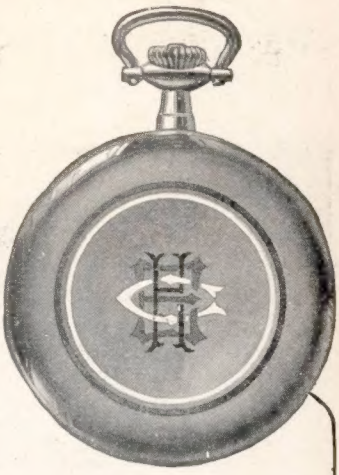

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